

PROBLEM WITH MY HEART OR ... ?

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At 7:30 that morning, the waiting room was awfully crowded. There were about 30-40 patients there, waiting patiently to be called, to see their own doctor, starting at 8am. The room is crazily cold, felt like inside an igloo in the Arctic or something. Worst, the metal not-so-ergonomic chairs were of course super-duper cold.

I was a clinic in a hospital, somewhere in central Jakarta. Cardiology clinic, to be exact. No more guessing. Yes, I need to see a cardiologist.

Almost all patients were elderly men and women, in their 70s. Some walked by dragging one of their leg, undoubtedly a sign of a previous stroke. Walking sticks are also common here and there, so did wheel chairs.

Suddenly I feel ancient. Prehistoric. Female at 49, having spent a lot of time in the field when I was young, I thought that my heart is as strong as an ox. When the second doctor also suspected that there is something, slightly, wrong with my heart, I still find it hard to believe. My Goodness! Never occur in my mind that I have a, or some, problem(s) with my heart.

My blood pressure is almost always ideal at 120/80. My cholesterol level is at a low 174, far from the threshold of 200. Triglyceride 69 only. Blood sugar is even quite low, 78.

Drink alcohol? No way (except red or white wine during invited dinner).
Cigarette? Never in my life! (one or two inhalants, I admit, when I was in high school).
Exercise? Sure I always swim regularly to cope with my back problem. I even fluent (not dare to say mastering) in all four swim styles. My diet? Just like what is suggested by any good doctor: cereal (red rice, even!), nuts, legumes, veggies, fruits, almost no meat or chicken (except chicken's claws), some fishes and marine creature. Drug? *Amit-amit deh!*

So?

A week ago, I felt some discomfort in my chest when I was working at home, finishing some reports. Then I felt constantly sleepy for a couple of hours. Short breaths. Also slight nausea. My dearest hubby rushed home when he read my sms, asking him to accompany me to go to a hospital in Bogor ('cause we live in Sentul, at the outskirts of Bogor).

I thought the doctor will give me a simple medicine and let me go back home right away. It turned out that my nose immediately was given oxygen and the nurse poked my back hand for an IV fluid. Probably my heart had some problems. So, EKG was performed. Surely I have to spend the night (and another night) in the hospital.

The 'opa' cardiologist the next morning, after staring at the EKG result and touching my chest several times with his stethoscope, just said plainly – *Ada penyumbatan!* (There is a blocking). What? What? What is it? What does it mean? - *Coroner*, he added. *You need further examinations using better equipments in Jakarta.*

Me? My heart is having a problem with my coronary? Get serious!

But hubby and me failed to have more info, as it was so, so difficult to persuade the cardiologist to talk more (my dear hubby said that his favorite sentence seemed to be 'take off your bra').

That's how I ended up in this cardiology clinic in a hospital in Jakarta. Half of my brain has already accepted that I might have some coronary problem, while the other half kept denying it.

My other cardiologist in the hospital in Jakarta is surprisingly young, well-dressed, very informative, and ... good looking! I wonder if there has been some lady patients who got a heart attack, by simply looking at him! (I did not choose him as my cardiologist, swear! It was my elder son who set my appointment with him).

The best part (his cute-ness does not count) was he explained clearly to me, to us. About possible causes. About what might have happened when I felt the chest discomfort. About anatomy of a heart and what coronary heart disease is (I keep wondering why everybody, including posters in the clinic wall, use the term 'disease'? It is not a disease at all, isn't it?) .

The cardiologist wanted me to be scanned immediately (and cost me, I mean my insurance, 3.5 million expensive rupiah). The CTA coronary, that's what they called the scanning process, made 64 slices of photos of my heart, each without and with a marker. Any blocking, clotting, narrowing, and other abnormalities of arteries and veins covering the heart (called coronary, or crowned blood vessels) will be detected. What an incredible machine! I wonder how much the machine costs. The machine looks like a big donut, reminding me to an outerspace transporter that can take a spaceship into another distant galaxy!

My laying body was passed into the donut several times. Doesn't feel anything, except when the marker was injected into my body. Suddenly, just for several seconds, my body felt warm. Somehow I feel that a tiny teeny bitty radioisotope marker still trapped inside my veins and arteries until now! (Hope not).

Back to my heart. The doctor did something else. Echo, he said. Just like an ultrasound scan, to see the inside of my heart, to determine whether my 'pumping machine' still worked well.

Hmm... he said, smiling. You have a heart of an athlete. Very strong! (I guess the swimming exercise paid off).

Then the CTA coronary results came up. The conclusion?

No heart disorder. Alhamdulillah. Thank God...

So what? Why I felt some kind of heart problems?

After a long friendly discussion and eliminating several possibilities, the cute cardiologist eventually came up with one conclusion: aging!

I had to remind myself several times that I am no longer young. The golden age of my life is almost over. My menopause is just half step away. And this is just one of many symptoms of pre-menopause syndrome.

Thank God again, my heart is OK. Thanks a lot Doc! (Pitty I won't see you again).

Menopause is a normal process, right? So, how bad it will be? I think I can cope with it.

Can I?