

MEDIA RELEASE

August 1, 2017

KIDNEY HEALTH AUSTRALIA INCREASES SECURITY FOR ITS ONLINE COMMUNITY

Kidney Health Australia has tightened security of its digital platforms after attempts by organ traffickers to contact the charity's clients.

"Online patient support groups are an invaluable resource for people living with kidney disease," said KHA's Clinical Director, Dr Shilpa Jesudason.

"Unfortunately, there are people who use online forums to try to lure vulnerable patients with promises of a kidney transplant overseas."

She said as well as brokers soliciting for patients, there were also cases of criminals using online forums simply to scam money from people living with kidney disease.

"Scammers and brokers always demand a substantial payment upfront and people can suddenly find they are thousands of dollars out of pocket.

"Not only do you put yourself at great risk financially by putting your faith in these unscrupulous people, but there is also an enormous risk to your health if you decide to go ahead with a transplant on the black market."

Dr Jesudason said as soon as KHA discovered its online channels were being accessed by overseas brokers, it temporarily closed its online forum and put a freeze on its private Facebook groups.

"As a further precaution we also unpublished our Facebook page and added extra security measures before re-opening it within 24 hours.

"We have closed our Facebook Groups and are exploring other more secure ways for our community to have open and supportive conversations. All forum comments are being reviewed by a dedicated staff member before being made publicly viewable.

"Similarly, any comment on our YouTube channel requires administrative approval before being made publicly visible," she said.

Dr Jesudason stressed that despite these increased security measures there was no way to keep online forums totally safe from scammers and brokers.

"People may not be who they say they are. They may start out being friendly, understanding and supportive, but they may be luring you into something quite dangerous."

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Dr Jesudason said if people were concerned about suspicious online activity they should contact Tracey Matters at tracey.matters@kidney.org.au or 0417 230 503.

Kidney Health Australia, formerly the Australian Kidney Foundation, is a national health care charity and peak body with a vision 'to save and improve the lives of Australians affected by kidney disease'.

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