

# 40pc of M'sians will suffer from mental health issues

PETALING JAYA: According to psychologists, four out of every 10 Malaysians will fall victim to some form of mental health issue in the course of their lives and the numbers will continue to rise, it was reported.

"The numbers are often downplayed due to the stigma that surrounds the condition," said International Medical University, consultant psychiatrist and addiction medicine specialist, Dr Philip George.

"The seriousness and prevalence of issues like depression, bipolar disorder and other mental health issues should be accepted and acknowledged first in order to be treated," he said.

The World Bank, in a report, had predicted that 340 million people will suffer from depression by 2020.

The Star quoted George as saying the condition was not something that only attacks the poor, weak and lonely as it could happen to anyone.

The National Health and Morbidity survey says only 1.8% of the Malaysian population are depressed. However, George

believes there is a flaw and says that at least 10% of Malaysians suffer from mental health issues.

He said unlike Caucasians, Asians do not talk about their problems.

"Asians do not talk about their problems. They do not have the words for emotions and that is a huge barrier," he said, adding that many of them consider having an emotional problem to be a weakness.

He said there are many people walking among us who are facing mild depression.

The National Institute of Health has found depression to be a most disabling disease as it is not tangible and people find it hard to empathise.

"It is not something one can snap out of, just like how people cannot snap out of diabetes or a stroke," George said.

He said with enough help and support, almost 90% of the patients could be restored to normal, although they may have a relapse as their emotions are more sensitive.

He said, however, with the right treatment these patients can be cured.