

Patient safety and public health should be made a culture

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The promotion of public health requires a combined effort and patient safety should be “internalized and embodied”, says the Health Minister.

Two Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) were signed between the Ministry of Health Malaysia (MOH) and International Medical University (IMU) to commemorate a partnership between the two institutions for the implementation of the MOH Komuniti Sihat Pembina Negara (KOSPEN) programme in the IMU community, as well as the development of an interactive online training module on patient safety.

Acting as the witness for the ceremony, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Health Minister, also gave a speech emphasizing the importance of public health and awareness on non-communicable diseases (NCDs), in particular. Established in 2014, the KOSPEN programme aims to address the rising prevalence of NCD and the resulting burden on society and the country.

He touched on how the increasing rates of NCD affects Malaysia, noting on the potential impact of NCD on the country’s productivity. Coupled with the rising cost of healthcare, NCD poses a compounding threat Malaysia’s socio-economy. Referring to the National Health and Morbidity Survey in 2015, Dzulkefly noted that half of Malaysian adults are overweight, a third suffer from hypertension and one-fifth have type 2 diabetes.

Through the KOSPEN-IMU partnership, five lifestyle aspects would be reviewed in all IMU activities and programs towards NCD prevention. These consist of healthy eating, regular exer-



Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah (2nd from left) and Professor Abdul Aziz Baba (2nd from right) exchanging the MoUs between the MOH and IMU, witnessed by Dato’ Dr Chong Chee Kheong, Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, Tan Sri Dato’ Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman and Prof Peter Pook Chuen Keat (back row).

cise, weight management, practicing a smoke-free lifestyle and early detection of NCD. Dzulkefly also stated that MOH will provide technical support, such as regular health screenings for staff and students, in ensuring the implementation of the five NCD prevention scopes.

Advancement in healthcare studies in Malaysia

The second memorandum acknowledges the collaborative development of an interactive online training module on patient safety for junior healthcare professionals and medical students prior to housemanship training. IMU aims to enhance the learning and teaching process through the online platform, which also includes self-assessment tools and will continue to expand e-learning to other courses with the aim of increasing accessibility, effectively reducing the limitations of distance.

Dzulkefly mentioned that every point in the process of providing care to patients carries certain inherent risks that can lead to patient safety incidents, listing out: medication errors, patient falls, erroneous transfusions and surgeries, misdiagnoses, among

others. Mistakes with regards to patient safety may not only cause unnecessary harm and suffering to the patients, but often also incur financial cost, as well as loss of trust and confidence towards the healthcare providers and healthcare system.

He noted that patient safety is always a topic that is overlooked, especially by experienced healthcare professionals. Dzulkefly stressed that patient safety should be “internalized and embodied” to ensure the best possible quality of care to all patients. Patient safety has been consistently plagued with legal and ethical issues, most of which could be drastically minimized if healthcare professionals make a conscious effort in recognizing the importance of patient safety in all aspects of treatment; from consultation through after-care.

In closing, Dzulkefly commented that expanding the online learning platform is a forward step towards healthcare education and hoped that the KOSPEN-IMU partnership will lead to an increase in awareness among the public towards NCDs.