

Work together to improve healthcare

I REFER to the report "Malaysia state of health a cause for concern" (*The Star*, Feb 7).

I agree with Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya who reflected on the deteriorating state of health that should be taken seriously by all health stakeholders and the public.

Over the last few years the increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as diabetes and hypertension is alarming as more younger patients are diagnosed with these diseases.

These diseases not only cause a significant burden to the individual's suffering but also pose a paramount challenge to the sustainability of the healthcare system as a whole.

As a healthcare professional, I think each citizen needs to be empowered to take responsibility for his/her own health through good health promotion partnership programmes.

I call on the Health Ministry (MOH) to enhance intersectoral collaboration with other government and pri-

vate agencies to improve health promotion programmes at every level.

For example, the MOH can work with the Information Ministry and university experts on the provision of specific programmes to cater for health promotion.

By having collaborations, operating costs can be minimised, and more importantly, manpower resources can be shared through active volunteerism calls.

Worksite health promotion activities should be made compulsory. In Penang, some factories have already embarked on initiatives with the help of local partners.

In order to access healthcare providers, the value of allied health professionals in providing health promotion activities should also be given recognition.

For example, highly trained community pharmacists are still under-utilised by the population to get health advice, which is given free and without any prior appointment.

Improving the referral process

between community pharmacists and general medical practitioners is vital as some of the problematic patients assessed by the pharmacists can be referred to the nearest GPs immediately for further evaluation should any problem arise.

Furthermore, the availability of point-of-care testing centres manned by qualified healthcare personnel for simple screening needs to be established near population areas, especially in urban areas, as diseases such as hypertension and diabetes are very insidious in nature and the sufferers might not be able to detect they have these diseases unless they go for routine diagnostic tests.

I hope that all the interested sectors can plan and work together for improving our health and this can be achieved by using the 3C concept – co-ordination, communication and commitment.

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