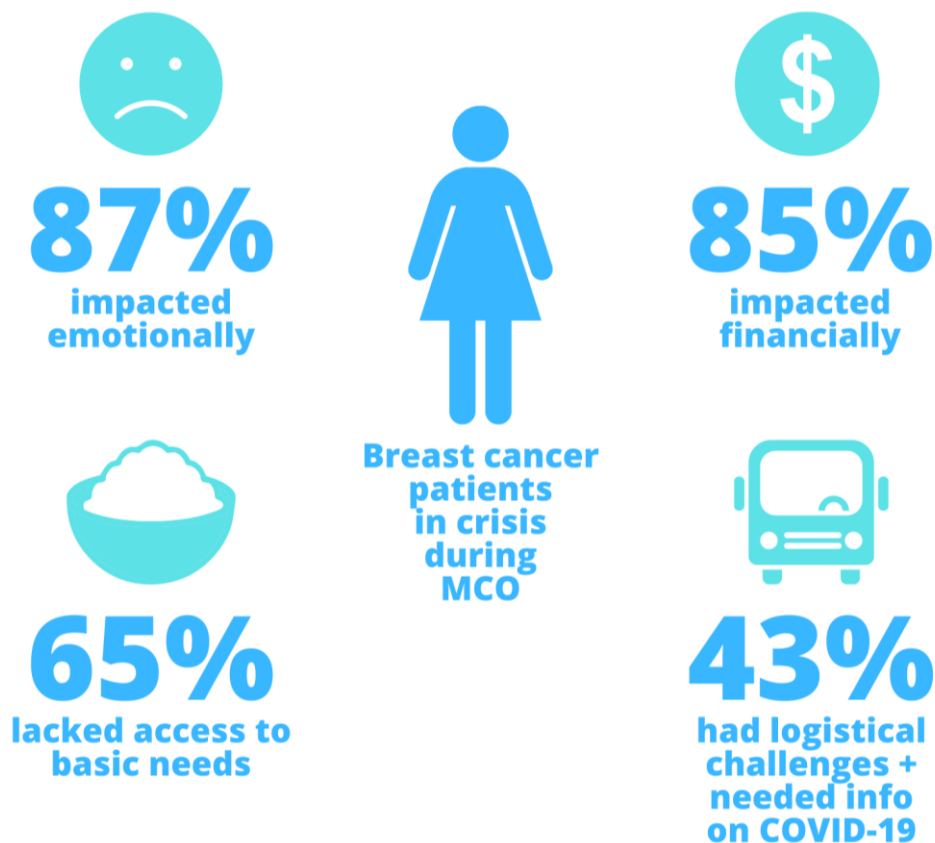


1 IN 4 BREAST CANCER PATIENTS ARE IN CRISIS, AND THEY NEED YOUR HELP

June is Cancer Survivors Month, and Cancer Research Malaysia's Patient Navigation Programme (PNP) has released new data on how breast cancer patients were coping amidst COVID-19 and MCO.

Late presentation and poor access or adherence to treatment is linked to up to half of the breast cancer deaths in Malaysia, and Cancer Research Malaysia's Patient Navigation Programme seeks to address this by helping underprivileged women overcome barriers to timely diagnosis and treatment.

Established as one-stop centres in collaboration with the Ministry of Health at public hospitals in Klang, Seremban, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu, the programme provides women diagnosed with breast cancer with information and support services to ensure that they receive timely diagnosis and complete their recommended treatment. However, with all four hospitals serving as major Covid19 referral centres since middle of March, there was concern about how breast cancer patients were coping with their treatment. To find out more, Cancer Research Malaysia reached out to 211 breast cancer patients, of whom 77% have a monthly household income under RM3,000 (half of those have zero income or a monthly household income under RM980). These were the main findings:



When asked about the impact of MCO on their lives,

- 25% of patients surveyed were assessed to be in crisis. Patients were 3 times more likely to be in crisis if they had household income <RM3,000 per month, or if they were Malay or Indian. Conversely, they were 5 times less likely to be in crisis if they had family members who were able to play the role of a carer;

- 46% of patients reported concern about attending hospital appointment, because of fear of infection. Malay women were more likely to express concern, with more than half expressing concern;
- Among women in crisis, 87% were impacted emotionally, with 44% fearing infection and 19% worrying about their safety;
- Among women in crisis, 85% were impacted financially, with many worrying about how to make ends meet because of the financial impact of both a cancer diagnosis and covid19. This was of particular concern for the majority of patients in this group who had a household income of <RM3,000 per month;
- Among women in crisis, 65% lacked access to basic needs, mostly because of the financial impact of covid19, but also the fear of leaving the house to obtain provisions;
- 43% of women in crisis had logistical challenges as well as needed information on COVID19.

Half of all patients reported that they needed **help during MCO**. This need was highest among low (57%) to moderate (56%) income groups. Particularly, patients requested for support from the Patient Navigation Centres in providing health/treatment advice (27%)

“The MCO was a time of extreme turbulence for me as my son was the only one working. He was the sole breadwinner of the family. It was really hard. Food was scarce due to financial hiccups. I have very strong faith in God so I prayed very hard knowing in my heart of hearts that he will show me a way. I am a strong believer that if God gets me to it, he will get me through it. Whenever I felt like giving up, I prayed and true enough, helped knocked on my door in the name of the Navigators from Cancer Research Malaysia and the doctors and nurses from the Ministry of Health,” shared a 51-year-old patient in Selangor.

“It was quite challenging to go to hospital as I need to cross the state and paying for taxis is expensive,” shared another patient, 56, who also lives with her elderly mother.

These breast cancer patients are low-income women supported by Cancer Research Malaysia’s Patient Navigation Programme. Many cancer patients from low-income households face barriers such as lack of awareness, late stage discovery or presentation, as well as financial and logistical challenges. In the past, 1 in 7 patients would drop out of treatment. PNP has made leaps and bounds in this aspect, as nurses and navigators work closely with patients, hospitals, public services, and the community, to identify gaps and implement practical interventions to improve timelines and ultimately survivorship. Through this effort more than 95% of patients completed their treatment.

Cancer Research Malaysia is calling for public support to help its Patient Navigation Programme continue to drive lifesaving action, and together with the Ministry of Health, improve cancer survival rates across Malaysia. Donate to Cancer Research Malaysia via Shopee or cancerresearch.my

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About Cancer Research Malaysia

Cancer Research Malaysia is the only non-profit organisation in Malaysia dedicated to saving lives through impactful research focusing on the Malaysian population and communities across Asia. Our research has already led to the discovery and implementation of new and effective breast cancer prevention strategies and our priority is ensuring that Asians are not left out in the fight against cancer. Together with our partners and supporters, Cancer Research Malaysia’s vision is a future free of the fear of cancer. Funding for our lifesaving



research depends on donations and sponsorship from the public and corporations. For more information, please visit www.cancerresearch.my or follow us at

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