

Ministry of Health and Cancer Research Malaysia Expand Life-Saving Patient Navigation Programme to Kelantan

Programme ensures timely diagnosis and treatment, reduces treatment default rate amongst B40 breast cancer patients

KOTA BAHRU, 6 November 2024 – Cancer Research Malaysia (CRM), the nation's leading independent cancer research organisation, signed a groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday with Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II (HRPZ II) to establish its internationally-acclaimed Patient Navigation Programme (PNP) in Kelantan, marking a significant advancement in breast cancer care for the East Coast region.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by Dato' Dr Zaini Hussin, Kelantan State Health Director; Dr Izamin Idris, Director of HRPZ II; Dato' Dr Imi Sairi Abdul Hadi, Senior Consultant in Breast and Endocrine Surgery at HRPZ II, Chief Surgeon for Breast Surgery Malaysia, and Head of Patient Navigation for the Ministry of Health, and several of the hospital leaders. CRM was represented by its Chief Scientific Officer and pioneer scientist Professor Dr Cheong Sok Ching, and Dr Jananezwy Kanapathy, a behavioural health psychologist who heads the Community Outreach Unit.

In his speech, **Dato' Dr Zaini Hussin** emphasised the importance of a smooth journey for a breast cancer patient - from noticing suspicious signs to diagnosis and the completion of treatment. He assured that all breast cancer patients in HRPZ II are supported holistically through the delivery of patient-centred care.

He added, "Having a Pink Ribbon Centre, a one-stop breast cancer care centre, integrated with PNP ensures that each patient is systematically guided by a competent team and their challenges addressed proactively so they can complete their treatment."

"This partnership represents a crucial step in our mission to ensure equitable access to cancer care across Malaysia," said **Professor Dr Cheong Sok Ching, CRM's Chief Scientific Officer**. "Our PNP, which was recently cited by World Health Organisation as exemplary breast cancer care management, has demonstrated remarkable success in achieving 98% treatment adherence rate, and expediting diagnosis, particularly among underprivileged patients."

PNP at HRPZ II will introduce a nurse navigator and a community navigator from CRM, and establish a specialised consultation facility, supported by streamlined processes for timely diagnosis and treatment. This development is particularly significant for

Kelantan's underserved communities, who often face multiple barriers to accessing cancer care.

CRMY also announced plans to expand PNP to three additional government hospitals in Kuala Lumpur, Perak, and Kedah later this month, reinforcing its commitment to support the Ministry of Health in enhancing cancer care accessibility nationwide. This expansion builds upon CRMY's successful implementation of PNP in four major hospitals: Hospital Sultan Ampuan Rahimah in Klang, Hospital Queen Elizabeth II in Kota Kinabalu, Hospital Umum Sarawak in Kuching, and Hospital Tuanku Ja'afar in Seremban. The programme has significantly improved patient outcomes through its innovative approach to healthcare delivery.

"Our commitment to pioneering research that translates into impactful healthcare initiatives aligns with our mission to make a meaningful difference in cancer care in Malaysia," added Professor Dr. Cheong. "The support from donors, especially Yayasan PETRONAS and Yayasan Sime Darby, reflects the trust that our partners place in our ability to drive positive change for cancer patients."

According to the latest National Cancer Registry Report, breast cancer remains a major threat to women in the country, with statistics showing an incidence rate of 38.9 per 100,000 women from 2017 to 2021. On 5 October, 2024, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof announced plans to expand Malaysia's network of cancer centres to improve access to quality cancer treatment nationwide, addressing the increasing number of reported cases.

Expanding Pink Ribbon Centres, especially within government hospitals, will help ensure that patients receive timely, life-saving treatments without a heavy financial burden. With strong government support and adequate funding, these centres can become an essential part of Malaysia's healthcare system. Underserved B40 patients will benefit from shorter waiting times, improved access to early cancer detection, and a robust support network. This investment in cancer care infrastructure not only meets the immediate needs of patients but also establishes a lasting foundation for future generations, ensuring accessible, high-quality cancer treatment for all Malaysians.

As a leading cancer research organisation, CRMY is committed to advancing equitable and accessible cancer care, enhancing the quality of life for countless Malaysians, and building a Future Free from the Fear of Cancer. The non-profit is entirely supported by grants and donations, which can be made at www.cancerresearch.my/donate.

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Kelantan Health Director Dato' Dr Zaini Hussin emphasised the importance of a smooth cancer care journey, from diagnosis to the completion of treatment.



CRMY's Chief Scientific Officer Professor Dr Cheong Sok Ching shared success stories of its current Patient Navigation Programme in four government hospitals



Kelantan Health Director Dato' Dr Zaini Hussin (front, far left) and **CRMY's Acting Head of Community Outreach Unit Dr Jananezswary Kanapathy** (far right) signing the MoU



CRMY's Chief Scientific Officer Professor Dr Cheong Sok Ching exchanging the signed MoU with **Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II's Director Dr Izamin Idris**



Kelantan Health Director Dato' Dr Zaini Hussin (centre) presenting a souvenir to **CRMY's Chief Scientific Officer Professor Dr Cheong Sok Ching**



Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II's Director Dr Izamin Idris presenting a souvenir to **Puan Hajah Shariah Nelly Francis, CEO of Yayasan PETRONAS**

About Cancer Research Malaysia

Established in 2000, Cancer Research Malaysia (CRM) is the country's first and only independent and non-profit cancer research organisation. Funded entirely by donations and research grants, it conducts cancer research to find better ways to improve survival, focusing on Asians.

In the breast cancer research programme, CRM has led the first and most comprehensive study building a risk-stratified approach for screening in Asian women, which allows more efficient and equitable screening and prevention to Asian women at higher risk of breast cancer. In addition, CRM has led the largest study of genomic profiles of Asian breast cancers, which provides critical insights into treatment and survival in Asian women. This has led directly to the development of the first investigator-led clinical trial to test new therapies in Asian breast cancer patients.

Since 2014, CRM has also established a nurse and community-led programme which has transformed the cancer care underserved Malaysian breast cancer patients.

Cancer Research Malaysia's work is entirely supported by grants and donations, which can be made at www.cancerresearch.my/donate. For more information, please visit www.cancerresearch.my and stay updated by following us on social media:

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