

Local misconceptions of dengue management a concern

RACHEL SOON

Despite the prevalence of dengue fever in Malaysia, a large proportion of the local population may still lack basic knowledge regarding management of the disease, says a recent survey.

According to the South-East Asia (SEA) Dengue survey, commissioned by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Consumer Healthcare, up to 70% of Malaysians believe that antibiotics are effective against dengue fever, while a similar proportion believe that a cure exists for the disease. Sixty-eight percent were unaware that paracetamol was the only WHO-recommended medication for symptomatic treat-

ment of fever associated with dengue, while only 49% of Malaysians surveyed felt confident in their knowledge of dengue symptoms.

"The majority of Malaysians surveyed report taking proactive measures to help prevent dengue, but when the fever strikes, we feel uncertain about how to recognize the symptoms, the steps to take to manage the disease, and most importantly, how to find out this crucial information," said Heather Pelier, South East Asia marketing director at GSK Consumer Healthcare. "This uncertainty illustrates that the need for education has become greater than ever, to ensure that Malaysians are equipped with both the confidence and knowledge to tackle dengue."

The survey involved 3,000 participants aged 18 years and above, with 500 drawn from each of six ASEAN countries—Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Country samples were primarily drawn from cities, with 80% of participants hailing from urban areas (100% in the case of Singapore).

New public and private allies in anti-dengue coalition

In conjunction with the release of the survey results, it was announced that Allied Against Dengue (AAD), a joint initiative to address educational needs of dengue management in South-east Asia, had added new partners to the existing coalition; UCSI



[L-R:] Dr. Ravindran Naidu (president, Malaysian Medical Association), Heather Pelier (Southeast Asia Area marketing director, GSK Consumer Healthcare), Bharati Suresh Chand (vice president, Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society), Associate Professor Dr. Yeong Siew Wei (deputy vice chancellor, UCSI University) and Christina Low (marketing director, Guardian Health and Beauty Sdn Bhd).

University Malaysia, Caring Pharmacy Group Berhad, Apex Pharmacy Marketing, and MIMS Health Today. Initial partners include the

Malaysian Medical Association, Malaysian Pharmaceutical Soci-

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ety, Guardian Health & Beauty Sdn Bhd and GSK Consumer Healthcare.

"The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is continually seeking ways in which patients and healthcare professionals can

be empowered with knowledge on [dengue] itself," said Dr. Ravindran Naidu, MMA president, speaking at the event. "For example, it is of great importance to be aware that a diagnosis of dengue fever can be made on the first day of infection with a simple needle prick."

Known as the fastest-spreading vector-borne viral disease in the world, almost 40%

of the world's population is estimated to be at risk of dengue; South East Asia carries the largest regional burden from the disease, with over 2.9 million people affected annually.

"When considering the significance of disease understanding and perceptions, empowerment is the best tool to combat dengue," said Bharati Suresh Chand, vice

president of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society.

"Through successful collaboration with our new partners, and the ever-growing support from healthcare providers, industry leaders, NGOs and members of the public, AAD will continue to intensify our public advocacy programme to help mitigate the impact of dengue on our communities." 