KEMENTERIAN KESIHATAN MALAYSIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

PRESS STATEMENT

NO KNOWN NEW SEROTYPE FOR DENGUE

I refer to the report publish by the NST on 17 January 2016 regarding the posibility of a new serotype Den 5. It has to be made clear that the new serotype has yet to be confirmed by the scientific community.

Even if the existence of dengue serotype 5 has been confirmed, I disagree with Prof Datuk Dr Mohamad Kadim, UNIMAS Vice Chancellor that it existence demand a new approach of diagnosing and treating patients. For individual patient diagnosis, the current laboratory assays in hospitals used worldwide will be able to detect it. This is because the current antibody assays can still be utilised for screening as antibodies produced during dengue infection often demonstrate some degree of cross-reactivity among all dengue virus serotypes. In addition, molecular diagnostic approaches can be used where flavivirus specific primers are used to pick this serotype and subsequently sequenced to determine its identify.

As far as treatment is concern, even for current existing dengue serotypes, there is no specific drug that can be used to kill the virus. Therefore treatment of this new serotype/strain/variant is not an issue as the current principle of managing dengue patient remains.

Although the potential of the virus to jump species (from monkey to human) is plausible, it is nothing unusual in dengue and many other flaviviruses (such as yellow fever virus) since sylvatic cycle do exist. In term of public health control, the approach is the same. Since it share the same mosquito vector, the principles of dengue control applies with primary focus on source reduction.

From the first reported case, it appears that it cause a mild infection. More research need to be carried to verify on this particular serotype/strain/variant and its clinical and public health impact. I sincerely hope that this kind of reporting does not deviate our focus on managing

the existing prevaling dengue serotypes which is already causing hundred of millions of infections and thousands of death worldwide. If we can manage and eliminate Aedes breeding places, we can manage dengue problem, no matter what dengue serotype that may come.

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