



(From fourth left) Lau, SRDC chairman Sempurai Petrus Ngelai and others gather for a group photo during the 'Interheart' Community Garden programme.

'Sibu Hospital's new MRI services to boost heart care, expand regional centre'

SIBU: The installation of the state-of-the-art cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) facility at Sibu Hospital is set to enhance cardiology services and could pave the way for a satellite centre in central Sarawak, said Councillor Kevin Lau.

The Sibu Rural District Council (SRDC) Public Health and Environment Standing Committee chairman said the high-technology cardiac MRI machine, valued at between RM8 million and RM9 million, was acquired at just RM2.6 million through an early trade-in agreement with the supplier.

"With the installation of this MRI machine, Sibu Hospital becomes the second hospital equipped with such a facility," he said during the closing ceremony of the 'Interheart' Community Garden Programme at Rumah Dawi Ringgil, Sungai Pasai here

on Sunday.

Lau added that the Sarawak Heart Foundation contributed RM2.5 million to upgrade the technology of the machine, further strengthening cardiology services at the hospital.

"The new facility not only improves the hospital's ability to diagnose heart diseases, but also supports plans to develop Sibu Hospital into a satellite heart centre.

"This will help ease congestion at the main heart centre in Kuching and make treatment more accessible for residents in central Sarawak," he said.

He noted that an official announcement on the satellite heart centre is expected from the Ministry of Health soon.

Commenting on the 'Interheart' programme, Lau stressed the importance of raising public awareness on heart health and

promoting healthy lifestyles through community gardening.

The programme was jointly organised by the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) and SRDC, with support from Urbanice Malaysia, Sibu Health Department, Sibu Divisional Agriculture Department, and the Ministry of Food Industry, Commodity and Regional Development.

Lau also thanked the Rumah Dawi village security and development committee, government agencies, the medical fraternity, and local residents for their cooperation.

"It is essential to take care of our health and our environment in an integrated manner for the well-being of the community. I hope this community garden will benefit residents here for years to come," he added.

Medical price guide launched

Don't accept costs at face value, warn consumer groups

By RAGANANTHINI
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PETALING JAYA: Private hospital bills are no longer a total shot in the dark.

Malaysians can now check the typical price tag for 26 common procedures before committing to treatment, under a new industry-led price guide.

The guide released by the insurance and takaful industry is aimed at lifting the lid on medical costs but consumer groups cautioned that transparency should not become a rubber stamp for rising fees or normalising high prices.

The Malaysian Insurers and Takaful Operators (ITOs) in collaboration with industry associations – Life Insurance Association of Malaysia (Liam), Malaysian Takaful Association (MTA) and Persatuan Insurans Am Malaysia (Piam) – established a central medical claims data platform referred to as the “MHIT Database”.

“This initiative aims to facilitate

the disclosure and publication of the price ranges of common healthcare services sought at private healthcare facilities in Malaysia,” the industry players said in the guideline published on the websites of insurance associations.

The price disclosure allows patients to compare costs and make informed decisions before receiving treatment, added the guideline.

Actual charges may differ depending on one's medical needs, the healthcare provider and the type of treatment required.

However, insurance coverage remains subject to the terms and conditions of one's policy.

The bill amount is presented in the form of the ‘Typical Bill Amount’ which refers to the median bill, where 50% of the patients are charged below the stated amount.

The rates given are for inpatient admissions where the length of the stay and daycare where the patient is discharged on the same day. The amount varies accord-

ing to states and age groups.

For example, the typical bill amount for cataract surgery is RM8,400 for daycare admission.

The typical bill amount for an angiogram is RM11,700.

The removal of fibroid where inpatient admission is required will cost RM24,600.

Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (Fomca) secretary-general T. Saravanan said that while the publication of the price guide may appear helpful, it is important to emphasise that this is fundamentally an industry-driven initiative and consumers should approach it with caution.

“The data is derived from insurance and takaful claims, which are part of a profit-oriented private healthcare and insurance ecosystem. As such, the figures reflect what the market has already charged and paid, rather than what may be fair, reasonable or affordable for the average Malaysian.

“There is a real risk that industry-generated data could normalise high prices instead of ques-

tioning or correcting excessive charges that consumers have long complained about in the private healthcare sector,” he said.

Saravanan said consumers should not treat the price guide as a benchmark or endorsement of acceptable pricing.

“We should wait for official, independently verified data from the Health Ministry to ensure accuracy, reliability and fairness. The Health Ministry's oversight is crucial to ensure that pricing information is grounded in medical necessity and public interest, not solely commercial considerations.

“In addition, any baseline recommendations on healthcare costs should ideally be guided by a neutral agency such as the Finance Ministry, to ensure pricing frameworks remain within the means of consumers and align with broader cost-of-living realities.

“Transparency must go hand in hand with strong governance, otherwise it risks becoming a tool that benefits industry players more than patients,” he added.

Rethink strategies to address vaccine refusal

IN the public sphere, there exists a small but influential group of vocal vaccine deniers who reject overwhelming scientific evidence, actively persuade others to refuse vaccination, and spread misinformation or manipulate facts to incite fear.

Patients who are influenced by this group would be labelled as “anti-vaccine” or “vaccine refusal” in their clinical records.

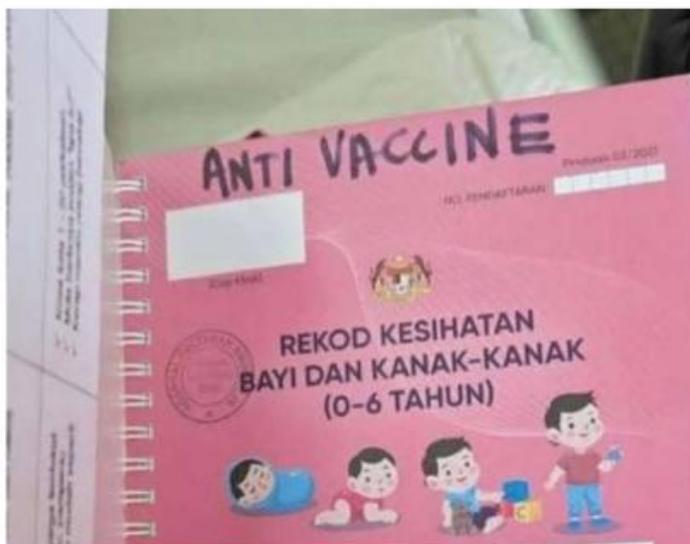
Let me be clear from the outset: this is not a dismissal of the very real frustration faced by healthcare workers when engaging patients who refuse vaccination. I work in the same clinics, face the same conversations and understand how emotionally draining these encounters can be.

What I question, however, is the practice of placing permanent labels such as “anti-vaccine” or “vaccine refusal” in patients’ clinical records. I do not believe this practice serves patients, clinicians or public health.

A clinical consultation is fundamentally different from a public debate. In the consultation room, we are not there to win arguments, shame patients or enforce compliance. Our responsibility is to offer the best available medical advice while respecting patient autonomy.

Permanent labels subtly but powerfully change the tone of care. They shape expectations before a word is spoken. Over time, they influence patience, empathy and even clinical judgement.

The encounter risks shifting from care to confrontation. Once



Picture courtesy of the writer

that happens, the therapeutic relationship begins to erode.

Behavioural science has repeatedly shown that vaccine acceptance exists on a spectrum, not as a binary choice. People move along this spectrum over time.

A patient may reject one vaccine but accept another. Someone who refuses today may accept months or years later after a life event, a trusted conversation or simply the passage of time.

Permanent labels deny this reality. They freeze patients at their most hesitant moment and follow them long after their views may have evolved.

In doing so, we risk turning a

temporary stance into a permanent identity.

Once patients feel judged, boxed in or written off, they disengage. When that happens, the opportunity for influence is lost entirely.

The ultimate goal of vaccination counselling is not to force acceptance. It is to build trust strong enough that when patients are ready to reconsider, they return to us.

This work is exhausting and demands patience, but healthcare has always carried an ethical burden that goes beyond efficiency. Strategy matters as much as stamina.

Some ask why healthcare professionals reject labelling in clin-

ics but use terms like “anti-vaccine” in public discourse. The answer lies in context.

If documentation is necessary, it should be temporary, transparent and can be revised, not permanent.

Patients should be informed that their decisions can change at any time and that the door remains open.

In our work training healthcare providers in vaccine communication, we have seen measurable reductions in vaccine refusal when trust-based, behaviour-informed strategies are applied consistently.

However, managing organised disinformation is not the responsibility of individual clinicians. Public health authorities must lead decisively in infectious disease communication.

Regulatory bodies must take a proactive role in curbing health misinformation. When silence comes from the top, narratives are filled from elsewhere.

Clinicians should not be expected to act simultaneously as caregivers, educators or enforcement agents.

Public health does not thrive on coercion or categorisation. It thrives on relationships built patiently over time. If we lose that, no amount of data, enforcement or messaging will bring that relationship back.

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Satu kes jangkitan tibi babit murid di Pontian

PONTIAN - Satu kes jangkitan tuberkulosis (tibi) disahkan berlaku melibatkan seorang murid di daerah ini.

Exco Pendidikan dan Penerangan Johor, Aznan Tamin berkata, Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah (PKD) mengesahkan kes itu dan tindakan segera diambil bagi membendung penularan.

Menurutnya, PKD Pontian mengenal pasti semua kontak rapat murid terbabit dan mereka diminta hadir ke Klinik Kesihatan Pontian menjalani saringan mengikut prosedur serta garis panduan ditetapkan Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM).

"Sebagai langkah pencegahan awal, tindakan sanitasi dan pembersihan menyeluruh akan dilaksanakan di kawasan-kawasan yang dikenal pasti berisiko," ujar-



AZNAN

nya dalam kenyataan pada Isnin.

Aznan turut mengingatkan semua sekolah perlu sentiasa mematuhi arahan dan garis panduan KKM bagi memastikan persekitaran pembelajaran yang selamat dan kondusif.

"Kesihatan dan keselamatan murid serta guru merupakan keutamaan kami. Kerjasama semua pihak amat penting bagi memastikan langkah pencegahan ini dapat dilaksanakan dengan berkesan," katanya.

Pada Khamis lalu, enam murid sebuah sekolah di daerah Kota Tinggi disahkan menghidap tibi hasil saringan kontak rapat yang dijalankan oleh KKM.

Bagaimanapun, keadaan dilaporkan terkawal, dengan semua murid terlibat kini menerima rawatan serta pemantauan rapi.



MUSIC has long been recognised as a form of artistic expression that not only serves as entertainment but also plays an important role in enhancing human mental and emotional well-being. Since ancient times, music has been used across various cultures as a medium to soothe the soul, convey emotions, and connect individuals with one another.

With advancements in the fields of medicine and psychology, music is now believed to be an effective therapeutic method, particularly in the area of mental health.

Music therapy refers to the planned and systematic use of music to support an individual's physical, emotional, cognitive, and social recovery. This therapy can be conducted actively through activities such as singing, playing musical instruments, and composing music, or passively by listening to music selected according to the patient's needs. Music is believed to influence emotions and stimulate the release of brain chemicals such as endorphins, which help create feelings of happiness and relaxation.

One of the main benefits of music therapy is its ability to reduce stress and anxiety. Music with a slow tempo and gentle melodies, such as classical music and natural sounds, can calm the nervous system, lower blood pressure, and regulate heart rate. When a person listens to soothing music, the body enters a more relaxed state, thereby helping to reduce emotional tension and prolonged anxiety.

In addition, music therapy plays a significant role in improving mood and assisting

individuals who experience depression. Music has the ability to directly influence emotions. Songs with upbeat rhythms and positive lyrics can lift one's spirits and create feelings of joy. For individuals suffering from depression, music therapy can help reduce feelings of sadness and hopelessness while providing motivation and encouragement to continue living more positively.

Music therapy also encourages self-expression among individuals. Not everyone is able to express their emotions through words, especially when dealing with trauma or deep emotional stress. Through music, individuals can express feelings such as sadness, anger, happiness, or disappointment in a freer and safer way.

Activities such as singing, playing musical instruments, or creating music allow individuals to release suppressed emotions without feeling pressured, thus supporting emotional healing.

Furthermore, music therapy helps improve sleep quality. Calming, slow-paced music can reduce restlessness and prepare both the body and mind for sleep. Listening to music before bedtime can stimulate the release of hormones that help the body relax, leading to deeper and more restful sleep. This is especially beneficial for individuals who suffer from insomnia or sleep disorders.

In conclusion, music possesses remarkable power in enhancing an individual's mental and emotional well-being. It is not merely a form of entertainment but also an effective therapeutic tool for treating various psychological issues. Whether through listening, singing, or playing musical instruments, music therapy offers numerous benefits that help individuals manage their mental health more effectively. Therefore, the use of music as therapy should be further strengthened as a supportive approach in the field of mental health to foster a more emotionally and mentally balanced society.