



Photo shows the awake craniotomy being performed on the patient. — Photo from Facebook/Miri Hospital-Official

First awake brain surgery a milestone for Miri Hospital

Philip Kiew

MIRI: It was a major milestone for Miri Hospital after its team performed its first-ever awake craniotomy using electrocorticography (ECoG) and functional mapping.

Undertaken on March 11, the procedure was led by consultant neurosurgeons Dr Manvinder Singh Mangat and Dr Lim Swee San.

The patient was a man diagnosed with seizures.

"The MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) revealed a low-grade glioma located in the left superior temporal region—the brain's critical speech centre.

"To remove the tumour safely without affecting the patient's ability to speak, the team performed an awake craniotomy using ECoG and functional mapping," said Miri Hospital in a Facebook post yesterday.

"Because the patient was awake throughout, the surgical team could monitor speech in real-time, ensuring maximum tumour removal while preserving vital functions."

Miri Hospital added that the patient was discharged home

To remove the tumour safely without affecting the patient's ability to speak, the team performed an awake craniotomy using ECoG and functional mapping.

Miri Hospital

healthy just two days later with no speech deficits.

It pointed out that previously, patients from northern and central Sarawak requiring such complex brain surgery would have to travel to Kuching or even to Kuala Lumpur—a journey that meant significant time, cost, and separation from family support.

"This milestone means that world-class care is now more accessible locally; patients and families can stay closer to home during challenging times; and Miri Hospital can continue its journey towards providing quality, advanced neurosurgery services for the region," it added.

In the post, the hospital expressed appreciation to the Miri Neurosurgical Services established by Dr Manvinder in 2018 under the vision of then-head of Neurosurgical

Services Sarawak Dr Albert Wong.

"Since then, the team has performed over 500 cases yearly covering tumours, spine and vascular issues, quietly serving thousands who once had to be transferred to Kuching.

"This is not just a surgical milestone—it is a reminder that when we work together, complex care can be delivered closer to home," said Miri Hospital.

It is informed that the Neurosurgical Department of Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) in Kuching has performed more than 15 awake craniotomies since 2017, and shared its clinical experience through its publication on this area of surgery from 2017 to 2022.

"The pioneering work at the SGH has laid the groundwork for procedures like this," said Miri Hospital.

Medicine flow under strain

Rerouted flights and longer routes put pressure on critical drug supplies

LONDON: The conflict in the Middle East is disrupting the flow of critical medicines to the Gulf, imperilling supply routes for cancer drugs and other treatments that require refrigeration and forcing companies to reroute flights and find overland access into the region, industry executives said.

The conflict, sparked by US and Israeli attacks on Iran two weeks ago and broadened by Iranian strikes around the region, has knocked out key air transit hubs and closed shipping routes, snarling the movement of goods for many products from medicines to food and oil.

While there are few signs yet of major shortages, that could change if the conflict drags on, some executives said.

The Gulf relies heavily on imports and some medicines have short shelf lives and need strict



cold-chain storage, making lengthy overland shipping less practical.

Executives at Western drug-makers said they were seeking alternative routes into the Gulf and trucking some drugs overland from airports like Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. Other options were Istanbul and Oman.

Major airports in the region including Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha have been closed due to strikes by Iran in response to US and Israeli attacks.

Dubai and Doha are major cargo hubs linking Europe with

Asia and Africa, with airlines Emirates and Etihad and logistics firms such as DHL handling temperature-sensitive drugs that must be kept within a narrow range to remain safe and effective.

Wouter Dewulf, a professor at the Antwerp Management School, cited industry data showing over a fifth of global air cargo – the main route for critical or life-saving drugs and vaccines – are exposed to Middle East disruption.

One executive cautioned that alternative “cold-chain corridors”, or temperature-controlled routes used for sensitive medicines, could not be set up overnight and were not always available.

Another pharmaceutical company executive said it had set up internal teams to prioritise patient-critical shipments, including of cancer treatments, and warned some temperature-

controlled shipments could miss connections unless proper storage and handling were secured.

A medical device company executive said the first step was to map shipments already in transit or ready to depart, then decide which pallets needed to be diverted and whether new shipments had to be planned.

The executive, who like others spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal operations, said some Europe-Asia cargo that typically move through Dubai or Doha airports was being rerouted via China or Singapore.

Sea routes were not practical due to longer journey times, as well as closure of the critical Strait of Hormuz by Iran.

“If you have an urgent surgery with a patient waiting for treatment, you have to choose the faster mode of transport,” the executive said. — Reuters

Biosimilars help expand access to medicines, ease healthcare costs

PETALING JAYA: As healthcare systems across Asia grapple with rising costs and growing demand for treatment, biosimilars are increasingly emerging as a key solution to improve access to medicines while maintaining financial sustainability.

For global pharmaceutical company Sandoz, expanding access to affordable medicines is central to its mission, particularly through generics and biosimilars that can help healthcare systems deliver quality treatment to more patients.

Industry leaders say that while innovation continues to transform healthcare, ensuring these advances translate into real patient impact requires strong collaboration across the healthcare ecosystem.

According to Sandoz president of Asian cluster Boon Huey Ee, who brings more than 25 years of experience across country, regional and global roles in the healthcare sector, innovation must ultimately serve both access and sustainability to create meaningful impact.

"I've seen first hand how innovation must serve both sustainability and access to achieve their desired impact," she said.

Awareness and acceptance of biosimilars have been steadily

growing in Malaysia and across the region, with more stakeholders recognising their potential to support healthcare systems under pressure.

Biosimilars, highly similar versions of original biologic medicines, offer comparable clinical outcomes while helping to manage treatment costs.

"Their adoption can enable patients to access therapies earlier while allowing healthcare providers to stretch limited budgets further. When biosimilars are adopted effectively, the impact can be meaningful for both patients and healthcare systems," Boon Huey said.

"They can enable earlier access to treatment for patients who may otherwise face delays, while also allowing healthcare institutions to stretch limited budgets further."

In many cases, she noted, the cost savings generated from biosimilars can be reinvested into other areas of healthcare, ultimately benefiting a wider group of patients.

Boon Huey's views are echoed by fellow Sandoz leader Christine Yan, who highlighted that biosimilars are playing an increasingly important role in strengthening healthcare resilience.

Beyond affordability, biosimilars help broaden treatment options and



Boon Huey says innovation is vital. Yan: Increasingly important role.

support the sustainability of healthcare systems facing rising demand.

Together, these developments are shaping a healthcare landscape where innovation and access go hand in hand.

While medical innovation is essential, Boon Huey emphasised that successful healthcare transformation ultimately depends on people.

Having led teams across multiple international markets, she believes that strategy alone is not enough to drive meaningful change.

"Strategy alone does not drive transformation people do," she said.

Drawing from her global experience, Boon Huey focuses on three key priorities: clarity of purpose, em-

powered teams and strong partnerships across the healthcare ecosystem.

Healthcare transformation often involves multiple stakeholders, from regulators and hospitals to policymakers and clinicians.

As such, building internal alignment within organisations and external alignment with partners is critical to ensuring progress.

"My role is to create alignment internally within teams and externally with stakeholders so that we move forward together," she said.

Boon Huey also believes that fostering diversity, equity and inclusion within organisations is essential to driving innovation in complex sectors such as healthcare.

"I've always felt that people do their best work when they feel comfortable being themselves," she said.

Creating an environment where employees feel safe to share ideas, including perspectives that challenge conventional thinking, can lead to stronger discussions and more effective solutions.

"In healthcare, the challenges are complex, so you really need different perspectives around the table," she added.

"When people feel heard and respected, conversations become more open and honest, and that's often where the best ideas come from."

Looking ahead, Boon Huey sees significant opportunities for biosimilars and generics to play a larger role in Malaysia and across Asia.

Healthcare systems worldwide are facing mounting pressure to deliver more with limited resources, creating growing demand for cost-effective treatment options.

For companies like Sandoz, this presents both an opportunity and a responsibility to help expand access to medicines.

"Looking ahead, I see a real opportunity for Sandoz in Malaysia and across Asia to continue expanding access to medicines, particularly through generics and biosimilars," Boon Huey said.

The mission is one that strongly resonates across her teams.

"There is a strong shared understanding of why access matters, and that commitment really drives how we approach our work," she said.

"As a team, we're focused on doing our part to help bring more treatment options to patients across the region."

Collective action needed to address obesity among women

WITH one in two adults in Malaysia overweight or obese, the need for a unified response is more urgent.

The rising trend of obesity places pressure on families, healthcare systems and the nation's long-term productivity.

To mark World Obesity Day and International Women's Day, Novo Nordisk Pharma (Malaysia) recently brought together the voices of healthcare professionals, corporate leaders, and people living with obesity to reframe how the nation understands and addresses this chronic disease.

Anchored under the theme Women in Leadership and Health, the discussion emphasised the need for driving equity, leadership and systemic reform for women, especially in improving outcomes for those who disproportionately experience the complexities of living with overweight

or obesity.

Obesity is increasingly recognised as a chronic, progressive disease shaped by biological, social and environmental influences.

Novo Nordisk Malaysia general manager Dr Praful Chakkarwar says in Malaysia, women living with overweight or obesity often face a disproportionate burden, not only in terms of health outcomes, but also through persistent societal stereotypes that frame weight as a measure of discipline, appearance, or personal failure. "These narratives can delay diagnosis, limit access to appropriate care and contribute to stigma in healthcare settings, workplaces and daily life."

According to research, 45 per cent of people living with overweight or obesity experience ongoing weight-related challenges, with nearly half feeling controlled by their weight

and 57 per cent relapsing into previous eating habits despite sustained efforts, adds Malaysian Obesity Society president and senior consultant endocrinologist Professor Dr Rohana Abdul Ghani.

"These findings highlight that obesity is not a failure of willpower, but a chronic condition, one that calls for collective care, supportive environments, and shared responsibility from families, workplaces, healthcare systems and society at large," she explains.

"When we invest in the right infrastructure and access to support women's health, providing her with the resources, the time, and the supportive environment she needs, we aren't just helping one person, we are creating a ripple effect," says IHH Healthcare group chief human resource officer Sharon Foo.

"When a woman is healthy, it leads to a healthy family, which builds a healthy workplace, and ultimately, a resilient community."



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TABIAT MEROKOK DAN RAMADAN

Peluang bersih hati, paru-paru



Bersama
**Dr Mohd
Hafyuddin
Md Yusuf**



**Anis Sofiah
Zolkharnain**



Jika seseorang mampu menahan diri daripada nikotin hampir 14 jam sehari sepanjang Ramadan, sebenarnya tubuh dan minda kita sudah mempunyai keupayaan untuk berhenti

amadan sering digambarkan sebagai bulan perjuangan. Kita menahan diri daripada makan, minum dan perkara yang membatalkan puasa dari terbit fajar hingga terbenam matahari. Menariknya, sepanjang tempoh itu ramai juga yang mampu menahan diri daripada menghisap rokok.

Namun, sebaik azan Maghrib berkumandang, ada yang terus mencapai kurma...dan menyalakan rokok. Hakikat ini menunjukkan sesuatu yang penting. Jika seseorang mampu menahan diri daripada nikotin hampir 14 jam sehari sepanjang Ramadan, sebenarnya tubuh dan minda kita sudah mempunyai keupayaan untuk berhenti. Ramadan mungkin peluang terbaik untuk memulakan langkah itu.

Pada masa sama, Malaysia kini berdepan satu realiti yang semakin membimbangkan. Laporan *Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Malaysia 2023* menunjukkan peningkatan ketara penggunaan rokok elektronik, khususnya dalam kalangan generasi muda. Prevalens penggunaan vape meningkat daripada 0.8 peratus pada 2011 kepada 5.8 peratus pada 2023, manakala 8.6 peratus individu berumur antara 15 hingga 24 tahun dilaporkan menggunakannya.

Angka ini memberi gambaran jelas ketagihan nikotin bukan lagi isu kecil, tetapi cabaran kesihatan awam yang semakin membesar.

Pakar perubatan kecemasan melihat kesan jangka panjang ketagihan nikotin daripada sudut klinikal. Otak remaja masih berada dalam fasa perkembangan. Pendedahan kepada nikotin boleh mengubah litar ganjaran dalam otak, menjejaskan kawalan emosi dan tumpuan serta meningkatkan risiko ketagihan berpanjangan.

Ramai yang terpengaruh dengan naratif bahawa vape adalah 'lebih selamat' atau sekadar satu trend semasa. Reka bentuk moden, perisa

buah-buahan, warna yang menarik dan promosi di media sosial menjadikan vape kelihatan biasa, malah kadangkala dianggap bergaya. Di sinilah kita perlu jujur bertanya, di manakah silapnya?

Hakikatnya, tiada remaja yang bercita-cita untuk menjadi penagih nikotin. Ramai yang sebenarnya menjadi mangsa strategi pemasaran industri yang sangat terancang.

Menurut *Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025*, Malaysia memperoleh skor 77 dan berada di kedudukan ke-85 daripada 100 negara, menunjukkan pengaruh industri tembakau terhadap dasar kesihatan awam masih signifikan.

Oleh sebab itu, usaha pendidikan kesihatan perlu menjadi lebih kreatif dan berkesan. Atas kesedaran inilah lahirnya Program Henti! Elak! Basmi Asap Tembakau! (H.E.B.A.T.) yang diterajui oleh Universiti Malaya.

Program ini memberi tumpuan kepada pendekatan rakan sebaya kepada rakan sebaya (*peer-to-peer*) dalam mendidik golongan muda tentang risiko rokok dan vape. Melalui komponen *Training of Trainers (ToT)*, pelajar universiti dilatih memahami sains ketagihan nikotin serta kemahiran komunikasi berkesan untuk menyampaikan mesej kesihatan kepada rakan

sebaya mereka.

Pendekatan ini penting kerana mesej daripada rakan sebaya sering dirasakan lebih dekat, lebih jujur dan kurang menghakimi. Program ini memperkenalkan strategi berhenti merokok praktikal melalui kaedah START:

S - Set a quit date: Tetapkan tarikh khusus untuk berhenti.

T - Tell others: Maklumkan kepada keluarga dan rakan untuk mendapatkan sokongan.

A - Anticipate challenges: Bersedia menghadapi gejala seperti keresahan atau keinginan kuat untuk merokok.

R - Remove tobacco: Singkirkan semua produk tembakau dan vape daripada persekitaran.

T - Tell your doctors: Dapatkan bantuan profesional melalui klinik berhenti merokok berhampiran.

Pendekatan ini mudah difahami, praktikal dan berasaskan bukti klinikal.

Kini, program H.E.B.A.T. telah berkembang ke beberapa universiti termasuk Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) dan Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS). Program ini juga pernah dilaksanakan di peringkat antarabangsa, termasuk di Maldives atas jemputan Kementerian Pendidikan negara tersebut. Di Sabah, misalnya,

pendekatan interaktif seperti latihan *role-play* dan simulasi menolak ajakan merokok membantu pelajar membina keyakinan untuk berkata 'tidak'. Namun, usaha seperti ini tidak boleh bergerak secara bersendirian. Ibu bapa, guru, profesional kesihatan dan penggubal dasar perlu berganding bahu untuk memastikan generasi muda tidak terjerumus dalam ketagihan nikotin.

Isu vape bukan sekadar isu kesihatan individu.

Ia soal masa depan negara. Setiap remaja yang terperangkap dalam ketagihan nikotin sebenarnya mewakili potensi besar yang mungkin tidak dapat berkembang sepenuhnya.

Jika kita mampu menahan lapar dan dahaga sepanjang hari, menahan diri daripada rokok juga bukan mustahil. Mungkin Ramadan masa terbaik untuk kita bukan sahaja membersihkan hati, tetapi juga membersihkan paru-paru.

Dr Mohd Hafyuddin Md Yusuf Ketua Projek Pelajar H.E.B.A.T merangkap Pensyarah Perubatan, Universiti Malaya (UM) manakala **Anis Sofiah Zolkharnain** pelajar perubatan tahun tiga di Universiti Malaya (UM)

WMM

WANITA & MASKULIN

LELAKI JUGA 'BURNOUT'

Walaupun lelaki kurang melaporkan masalah emosi, tekanan yang dipendam boleh membawa kesan yang lebih serius jika tidak ditangani dengan baik

FOKUS

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Fenomena lelaki yang mengalami tekanan emosi atau 'burnout' dalam diam semakin mendapat perhatian pakar kesihatan mental di seluruh dunia.

Walaupun tekanan hidup bukan sesuatu yang baharu, cara lelaki menghadapinya sering berbeza berbanding wanita.

Dalam banyak masyarakat termasuk di negara ini, lelaki masih dibentuk dengan tanggapan bahawa mereka perlu sentiasa kuat, tidak mudah menunjukkan emosi dan mampu menyelesaikan masalah sendiri.

Persepsi ini mengakibatkan ramai lelaki memilih untuk menyimpan tekanan perasaan tanpa berkongsi dengan orang lain, sekali gus meningkatkan risiko masalah kesihatan mental yang lebih serius.

Berdasarkan Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO), kemurungan dan gangguan keseimbangan adalah antara penyumbang utama kepada masalah kesihatan mental global.

Walaupun wanita dilaporkan mengalami kemurungan pada kadar lebih tinggi, lelaki pula lebih cenderung untuk tidak mendapatkan bantuan profesional apabila berdepan tekanan emosi.

Badan dunia itu juga menyatakan bahawa kadar bunuh diri dalam kalangan lelaki secara global adalah jauh lebih tinggi berbanding wanita.

Data ini menunjukkan bahawa walaupun lelaki kurang melaporkan masalah emosi, tekanan yang dipendam boleh membawa kesan yang lebih serius sekiranya tidak ditangani dengan baik.

Di Malaysia, isu kesihatan mental turut menjadi perhatian sejak beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini.

Tinjauan Kesihatan dan Morbiditi Kebangsaan (NHMS) yang dijalankan oleh Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) mendapati kira-kira 2.3 peratus rakyat dewasa negara ini mengalami kemurungan.

Walaupun kajian itu tidak memfokuskan secara khusus kepada lelaki sahaja, pakar kesihatan mental sering menegaskan bahawa golongan lelaki kurang



STIGMA masyarakat tentang 'lelaki perlu kuat' menyumbang kepada keadaan ini.

tampil mendapatkan rawatan atau kaunseling kerana faktor stigma sosial.

Ramai yang bimbang dilihat lemah sekiranya mengakui sedang bergelut dengan tekanan emosi.

Pakar Kaunseling Keluarga, Hushim Salleh

berkata, tekanan hidup moden juga memainkan peranan besar dalam fenomena burnout dalam kalangan lelaki.

"Beban kewangan, tanggungjawab sebagai ketua keluarga, tuntutan kerja yang semakin

kompetitif serta kos sara hidup yang meningkat boleh menimbulkan tekanan berpanjangan," katanya.

Pada masa sama, kajian yang diterbitkan oleh Pertubuhan Buruh Antarabangsa (ILO)

menunjukkan bahawa tekanan kerja kronik boleh membawa kepada burnout iaitu keadaan keletihan emosi, mental dan fizikal akibat tekanan berterusan di tempat kerja.

Hushim berkata, lelaki yang bekerja dalam sektor bertekanan tinggi atau mempunyai tanggungjawab kewangan besar sering berisiko mengalami keadaan ini tanpa disedari.

"Selain tekanan kerja, perubahan struktur sosial turut mempengaruhi keadaan ini, dalam masyarakat moden, peranan lelaki dalam keluarga semakin kompleks.

"Jika dahulu lelaki sering dilihat sebagai penyumbang utama pendapatan keluarga, kini ramai pasangan suami isteri sama-sama bekerja dan berkongsi tanggungjawab kewangan.

"Walaupun perubahan ini membawa banyak manfaat, sebahagian lelaki masih merasakan tekanan untuk memenuhi jangkaan tradisional sebagai pencari nafkah utama," katanya.

DAPATKAN KHIDMAT NASIHAT

Lelaki juga perlu dapatkan sokongan dan amalkan gaya hidup sihat selain bantuan profesional bagi wujudkan mental sihat



DARI MUKA 3S

Beliau berkata, konflik antara peranan tradisional dan realiti kehidupan moden ada kalanya menimbulkan tekanan psikologi yang tidak mudah diluahkan.

Menurutnya, cara lelaki dan wanita memproses emosi berbeza, lelaki secara umumnya kurang cenderung berkongsi masalah secara terbuka dan lebih memilih pendekatan menyelesaikan masalah secara dalaman.



Beban kewangan, tanggungjawab sebagai ketua keluarga, tuntutan kerja yang semakin kompetitif serta kos sara hidup yang meningkat boleh menimbulkan tekanan berpanjangan

HUSHIM SALLEH



TEKANAN mental tidak mengenal jantina; namun wanita lebih memilih meluahkan daripada lelaki, yang memendam rasa.

"Sikap ini mungkin membantu dalam situasi tertentu, namun dalam jangka panjang ia boleh mengakibatkan tekanan emosi terkumpul.

"Apabila tekanan tidak diurus dengan baik, ia boleh menjejaskan

hubungan keluarga, prestasi kerja serta kesihatan fizikal seperti gangguan tidur, tekanan darah tinggi dan keletihan melampau.

"Fenomena ini turut memberi kesan kepada institusi keluarga, tekanan

emosi yang tidak diluahkan kadangkala menjadikan lelaki lebih mudah marah, menarik diri daripada komunikasi atau kurang terbabat dalam kehidupan keluarga," katanya.

Kata beliau lagi, keadaan ini boleh mewujudkan

jurang emosi antara pasangan serta anak-anak.

Sehubungan itu, semakin ramai pakar menekankan kepentingan meningkatkan kesedaran tentang kesihatan mental lelaki.

Langkah seperti

CARA lelaki yang lebih suka memendam rasa menyumbang kepada tekanan mental.

mendapatkan sokongan rakan, berbincang dengan pasangan, mengamalkan gaya hidup sihat serta mendapatkan bantuan profesional sekiranya perlu adalah antara cara yang disarankan.

Dalam beberapa tahun kebelakangan ini juga, semakin banyak kempen kesihatan mental yang menekankan bahawa mendapatkan bantuan bukan tanda kelemahan, sebaliknya langkah berani untuk menjaga kesejahteraan diri.

Hakikatnya, tekanan hidup adalah sebahagian daripada realiti kehidupan moden dan ia boleh dialami oleh sesiapa sahaja tanpa mengira jantina.

Namun, dalam konteks lelaki, budaya memendam emosi sering mengakibatkan masalah itu kurang kelihatan di permukaan.

Oleh itu, perubahan sikap masyarakat terhadap kesihatan mental amat penting supaya lelaki juga berasa selamat untuk berkongsi tekanan yang mereka hadapi.