

**PRESS RELEASE BY
THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH
“TOWARDS EXCELLENCE IN PHARMACY SERVICES”**

Towards realisation of the Government's Transformation Program and holding steadfast to the motto “1Malaysia, People First, Achievement Now”, the Ministry of Health Malaysia strives to provide excellence in its services in ensuring the health and well being of the nation. Internalisation of the culture “We are ready to serve” is proof that the Ministry is sensitive to the needs and wants of patients and our customers who require treatment and in the maintenance of wellness.

Despite the many challenges and hurdles faced, the Ministry of Health has succeeded in implementing numerous programs and activities with the objective of achieving a standard of health comparable to that of developed nations. These achievements are evident from the encouraging results obtained in the *Key Performance Indicators* (KPI). In line with the rapid technological advancements available, the delivery of healthcare services is a paradigm shift with regard to efficiency, effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

All programmes, including the Pharmaceutical Services, have invested much effort towards improving services particularly those in pertinent areas. Pharmaceutical services which were traditionally product centered have now shifted their focus towards the patient. Pharmaceutical care which is comprehensive and patient focussed is vital in ensuring that patients receive rational, safe and effective treatment.

Specialised services such as Clinical Pharmacokinetics, the Nutritional Support Services, Oncology and Nuclear Pharmacy have provided the opportunity to individualise drug treatment based on patient needs. This has enabled the provision of better treatment modalities whilst minimising occurrence of adverse effects.

Pharmacists today work alongside other medical professionals in an increasingly cohesive environment and together they play an active role in patient care. An example of this close relationship is the presence of pharmacists at ward rounds. A new service, 'Medication Therapy Adherence Clinics' (MTAC), have been established in 74 major hospitals, 62 hospitals with specialists, 14 district hospitals and 37 health clinics. Through these clinics, measures are taken to ensure patient compliance to drug therapy and monitoring is done in order to optimise therapy and minimise the occurrence of complications.

The Methadone Replacement Programme exhibits another example of the active role played by pharmacists as they are involved not only in dispensing methadone but also in counselling and conducting on-going monitoring of these patients. These responsibilities are carried out in 110 MMT centres under the Ministry of Health, 14 centres under the National Anti-Drug Agency, 12 prisons in Peninsular Malaysia as well as in mosques which carry out the methadone programme.

In order to ensure that customer satisfaction is given due importance, a waiting time of not more than 30 minutes for patients to receive their medications has been made a KPI. In 2009, 93% of hospitals and health clinics succeeded in achieving this target. This is equivalent to 95.4% out of a total of 39.4 million out-patient prescriptions being dispensed within the target time. While these are encouraging results, the Ministry strives to overcome weaknesses in the system and continually improve these figures in order to achieve 100% compliance with this KPI.

Technology and telecommunications have been effectively used through innovative and creative ideas by the Pharmaceutical Services to further improve the drug delivery system. These novel methods include the Integrated Drug Dispensing System, Drive through Pharmacy, SMS and Take as well as the appointment card system which have enabled patients to collect repeat medications at their own convenience. To date, 87 hospitals and 38 health clinics have commenced these services. The SMS and Take

service in particular has been very well received as patients only need to send an SMS to the pharmacy before going to pick up the balance of their repeat medications. Due to the success of this service, the Ministry of Health is keen and committed to expand it to include all healthcare facilities in the country.

Patients who are being treated at hospitals located far from their homes are encouraged to take advantage of the Integrated Drug Dispensing System offered by all government hospitals through which patients can opt to collect their repeat medicines from any government hospital or clinic of their choice. This will enable patients to save time and travel expenses. In 2009, a total of 115,086 prescriptions were handled via this system as compared to 62,100 in the preceding year. This demonstrates an impressive increase of 85%.

The Drive through Pharmacy system introduced in two hospitals, Penang Hospital and the Tuanku Fauziah Hospital, Kangar is another development to be proud of. Patients can now drive directly to the dedicated counter and collect their medicines without having to wait. Due to the positive impact of this system, provisions for such services have been included in the development plans for new healthcare facilities.

The 'Pharmacy Home Delivery' service is the latest initiative and has been run as a pilot project in Putrajaya Hospital. This service enables patients to receive their repeat prescriptions via Pos Laju at a minimal charge. Together with the cooperation of Pos Malaysia, the Ministry of Health plans to broaden this service to include all healthcare facilities throughout the country in order to make it easy for patients to get their medicines. In addition, this service is will help reduce the often overwhelming number of patients who attend hospitals and clinics every day.

In order to raise awareness amongst the public with regard to usage of medicines and their rights as consumers, the program 'Kenali Ubat Anda' or 'Know Your Medicine' has been launched. Various activities have been conducted and educational materials produced in order to fulfill the objectives

of this program including the development of a website www.knowyourmedicine.com. A National Pharmacy Call Centre which operates 24 hours a day inclusive of public holidays has also been set up to enable members the public to obtain drug information any time. This hotline which is in Hospital Kuala Lumpur can be reached at 03-26155136.

The dynamic developments and achievements of the Pharmaceutical Services have been commendable and the Ministry of Health shares with pride the success of Penang Hospital's "Drive through Pharmacy" which won an award at the Asian Hospital Management Awards 2008 in Manila, Philippines. Last year, the Sultanah Fatimah Specialist Hospital in Muar, Johor received the Chief Secretary to the Nation's Award at the 26th Innovative and Creative Group Convention (Public Services) for their innovative pharmacy store management program which was designed in-house by their very own pharmacy staff.

I am certain that through its commitment and dedication, the Pharmaceutical Services will continue to aim for excellence in the provision of quality patient care which is clinically sound, cost effective and will strive to always delight the public and society.

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