

Headline **Methadone does help addicts**
Date **13 Feb 2010**
MediaTitle **New Straits Times**
Section **Local News**
Journalist **N/A**
Frequency **Daily**
Circ / Read **139,763 / 330,000**

Language **English**
Page No **10**
Article Size **143 cm²**
Color **Black/white**
ADValue **1,980**
PRValue **5,940**



'Methadone does help addicts'

PUTRAJAYA: Getting hardcore drug addicts to give up the habit by administering methadone as a substitute has a 92 per cent success rate.

The National Anti-Drug Agency believes this treatment works in preventing relapses among older and heavier drug users.

Its deputy director-general (operations), Prof Dr Mahmood Nazar Mohamed, said 617 drug users, registered with the agency, were undergoing the Methadone Drug Substitution Therapy (MDST).

He said the success rate was seen in the past 18 months.

Dr Mahmood dispelled the negative perception of the treatment — which suppresses the craving for the "high" found in heroin and also helps to control the spread of HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and other diseases through needle sharing — that it was supporting the problem rather than helping the addicts.

It was reported that a large majority of doctors who treat-



Prof Dr Mahmood Nazar Mohamed says some addicts will ask to stop the methadone treatment

ed drug users stopped offering the treatment because people grew suspicious when drug addicts came to clinics to get their dose of methadone.

"This is a treatment. It is to make sure a person stops taking illegal drugs and is able to go to work, raise a family and continue living a normal life."

According to Dr Mahmood,

Nada selects the people for the therapy and refers the list to a doctor, who would then make the final decision.

After the first dose is prescribed, a pharmacist takes over the administering of methadone while the doctor monitors all users every few months to determine the required dosage.

He said drug users who were taking methadone could continue with the treatment for an indefinite time frame.

"Sometimes they are on it for life. If the person is a hardcore user, it is difficult to get rid of the habit completely. But there is a small group which eventually asks to stop the methadone treatment."

He said methadone would not be prescribed to a young person, who is usually advised to go on a "drug abstinence" treatment for two years.

"This is like taking medicine for diabetes. You can't stop a diabetic from taking sugar, but you can give him medication to control his sugar level."