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# Govt hospitals to continue giving HIV/AIDS drugs

By Winnie Kasmir

**SANDAKAN:** Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin has assured that her ministry will continue to prescribe anti-retroviral drugs (ARV) to HIV/AIDS patients at government hospitals and clinics.

She said the ministry has now updated the ARV treatment in accordance with the latest World Health Organisation's guidelines of prescribing ARV drugs to patients at CD4 level.

"Using the new criteria, more HIV patients will get the benefit and the availability of treatment through ARV, the life of an HIV sufferer will become more meaningful and their life expectancy longer than without

treatment," she said.

UNAIDS (the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) and the World Health Organisation have stressed the need for ARV drugs to be prescribed to HIV/AIDS patients since the drug is not only able to reduce the HIV virus in the body but will also lengthen their life expectancy and increase their quality of life.

From statistical records, in 2010 a total of 13,981 HIV/AIDS patients nationwide have been prescribed with anti-retroviral drug involving an expenditure of RM32.5 million.

"By the end of 2011, an estimated 15,000 HIV/AIDS patients will receive ARV treatment", Rosnah said at the opening ceremony of

national-level celebration of World AIDS Day held at the hall of SM Yu Yuan here yesterday.

World AIDS Day is remembered on every December 1 since 1998 and the global theme of 'Getting to Zero' has been chosen for this year until 2015 in line with the United Nations' resolution to address HIV/AIDS, which is zero new HIV infection, zero discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers and zero AIDS related deaths.

Rosnah also urged the 'most at risk population' (MARPS) to undergo a test in order to know of their HIV status which is provided free at government health facilities.

Her speech was delivered by the deputy director general of Health, Dr Lokman Hakim Sulaiman.