

Headline	Blood screening crucial for detecting Hepatitis		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (KK)		
Date	01 Nov 2012	Color	Black/white
Section	Home	Circulation	88,150
Page No	b2	Readership	166,173
Language	English	ArticleSize	236 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 1,359
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 4,077



Blood screening crucial for detecting Hepatitis

KUALA LUMPUR: According to statistics by world health authorities, about four billion people across the globe have Hepatitis C while there are 170 million chronic patients.

Fatalities due to Hepatitis C number almost 350,000 a year.

Selayang Hospital's liver specialist Dr Mohd Shamsul Amri says almost 1.5 per cent people in Malaysia have Hepatitis C.

He adds that people suffering from the disease might have no idea about their illness as there are no symptoms and they may even have infected others without realising it. Unlike many other diseases, Hepatitis C shows no symptoms and is difficult to detect.

Dr Mohd Shamsul says Hepatitis C is regarded as a 'silent killer' as the virus may exist in a person for a long time, as long as a few decades, in some cases.

"The patient may not know that he has the disease until he reaches a critical stage," he explains.

Some Hepatitis C patients only realise that they are carrying the virus after experiencing liver problems like failure of the hepar or liver cancer.

Dr Mohd Shamsul says the sharing of hypodermic needles is a common reason for the disease's transmission, similar to the spread of HIV. Before 1994, when there was no screening for Hepatitis C virus, the disease could spread via blood transfusions.

He says more than 60 per cent of the Hepatitis C cases are caused by sharing of hypodermic needles, adding that those who go for haemodialysis treatment as well as those practicing acupuncture or having tatoos on their bodies are prone to infection by the Hepatitis C virus.

He says the infection takes some

30 to 50 years before damages the liver and the infection undergoes several stages without the patient noticing it.

During the initial stage, the patient usually does not notice any symptoms of the disease but when it goes into the second stage, the patient begins to experience liver cirrhosis, liver failure and even liver cancer.

In some cases, there are chances of eradicating the virus and the liver returning to its normal state.

"But in 85 per cent of the cases, Hepatitis C becomes a chronic issue," says Dr Mohd Shamsul.

He says that genetic factors, age and metabolism govern whether the patient has a chance to make recovery. However, the success of treatment depends on the degree of liver damage.

Dr Mohd Shamsul informs that to this date, there is no vaccine

against Hepatitis C and the chances of recovery are high for a patient if they get early treatment.

The medication stops the virus from spreading and can be taken by injection every week and can be consumed orally for six to 12 months depending on the type of Hepatitis C.

Dr Mohd Shamsul says that the health authorities are taking steps to improve public awareness on Hepatitis C.

He advises those with symptoms to undergo blood screening to detect the Hepatitis C antibodies. The blood screening can be carried out any government or private hospitals.

"Early detection is crucial for the success of treatment," he says.

The world hepatitis day was on July 28. Its theme this year was 'It's Closer than You Think'.
- Bernama