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# Community-based treatment for drug dependency very effective

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**KUCHING:** Community-based treatment for opioid dependency is proving to be highly effective, says Addiction Medicine Association of Malaysia president Dr Stephen Chow.

"There is a retention rate of more than 80% from 2009 to 2011 which indicates that patients who are receiving treatment continued to remain in treatment so community-based Drug Substitution Therapy (DST) works.

"The overall results are far superior than that of institutionalised

treatment in the past," he said at the Second International Conference of Addiction Medicine incorporating the Seventh National Conference of Addiction here yesterday.

Of the 23,573 registered opioid dependent patients in Malaysia currently undergoing treatment, 23,125 are males while 448 are females.

The statistics also revealed a racial demographic mix comprising 71% Malays, 16% Chinese and 6% Indians.

It also indicates that majority of patients are aged 31 to 38 (8,086 patients), 39 to 46 (6,305 patients) and 47 to 54 (4,198 patients).

The rest are aged 23 to 30 (3,141

patients) and above 54 (1,872 patients).

Community-based drug substitution therapy also decreases the risks of blood-borne transmissible diseases like HIV as few patients would return to their old habits of injecting drugs.

There has also been a marked decrease in drug-related arrest based on the National Anti-Dadah Agency statistics since the inception of the community-based DST since 2002.

Opioid dependence is a chronic relapsing medical condition that required long-term treatment, family and community support.