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WHO: Geckos not cures for HIV/AIDS or cancer

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PUTRAJAYA: Geckos are not cures for HIV, AIDS or cancer.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) posted a message on its Facebook page to remind people that reports stating otherwise were not true.

WHO's posting coincided with wildlife trade watchdog TRAFFIC's call for the protection of the *to'keh* (or tokay) gecko, following a sharp increase in illegal smuggling of the lizard in Southeast Asia.

"We'd like to remind you that the gecko is not a cure for HIV/AIDS, or cancer.

"The rumour that says otherwise is a hoax," the WHO message stated.

"There is no scientific evidence that gecko can cure HIV/AIDS or cancer.

"Nor is there information on the safety and hygiene consequences from exposure to geckos," the health organisation said.

Malaysian Society for HIV Medicine immediate past president Dr Christopher Lee said: "We strongly advise people who are infected with HIV to continue with the anti-retroviral treatment provided free in government hospitals.

"This is because the anti-retroviral treatment is the only treatment that

is proven to work so far in the four decades of the HIV epidemic," he added.

TRAFFIC was quoted in *The Star* yesterday as saying that the demand for tokay geckos had skyrocketed recently due to unfounded claims on Asian websites and blogs that consuming the reptile's tongue and internal organs could cure HIV and cancer.

There is no scientific evidence that gecko can cure HIV/AIDS or cancer.
 - WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION