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Addicts with children

The 2010 National Drug Substitution Therapy NDST report launched in conjunction with World Health Day last month captures the progress in treating drug addiction and highlights the crucial need to address addicts with children to prevent further harm to them.

THE Addiction Medicine Association of Malaysia (AMAM) will prioritise access of treatment for addicts who have children as its next step moving forward.

According to its 2010 National Drug Substitution Therapy (NDST) report launched in conjunction with World Health Day 2010, themed "Changing Cities, Changing Lives", the 66% of patients undergoing treatment are aged above 30 and are likely to already have children.

The report indicates that most patients are aged 31 to 38 (5,880 patients), followed by those aged 39 to 46 (4,239 patients) and those aged above 54 (2,797 patients).

Meanwhile, there are 2,555 patients aged 23 to 30, 56 patients aged 16 to 22.

"The statistics underscore a real need for the respective ministries and the treatment community to examine new approaches to enhance community-based treatment options that would address the specific needs of addicts with families with young children," said Dr Steven Chow, president of the Addiction Medicine Association of Malaysia (AMAM).

"It is critical if we want to address the need for early prevention and treatment. Moving forward, to support patients, parents and families as well as prevent possible physical and emotional harm to their next generation, we must improve community awareness programmes and strengthen social re-integration strategies through various healthcare ancillary services."

Dr Chow said that this includes:

- Early social services intervention to prevent harm to children.
- Prioritising parents' access to treatment where children are at risk.
- Providing intensive parenting guidance and supporting family members such as grandparents who take on the responsibilities as care giver.

Other measures include developing a support package to help patients complete treatment and re-establish their lives, such as a system to ensure local arrangements and facilities are in place, right up to referring patients to job centres as well as sources of

housing advice and advocacy.

"It is paramount that we also study how to

better encourage patients to engage with treatment and recovery support services and what they will need to stand on their feet again," said Dr Chow.

Currently, there are 22,139 patients undergoing treatment in March 2010 compared to 18,744 in March 2008, a growth of approximately 18%.

"The modest achievements of our programmes are reflective of a vigorous public-private partnership and dedicated treatment community who are committed in tackling drugs and changing lives," Dr Chow said.

Of the total number of patients undergoing treatment, 21,705 patients are males while 434 are females. According to the report, 15,677 were Malays (70%), followed by 3,678 of Chinese patients (16%) and 1,257 Indians (5%).

Most patients undergoing treatment are located in Selangor (3,958), followed by Johor (3,802), Perak (2,619), Pahang (2,394), Kuala Lumpur (1,904), Kedah (1,829), Penang (1,587), Kelantan (1,332), Melaka (1,169), Terengganu (846), N. Sembilan (547), Perlis (140) and Labuan (12).

The 2010 NDST report captures the progress and trends of patients undergoing the nation's largest drug treatment network under the care of the Addiction Medicine Association Malaysia founded by the Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations Malaysia.

The report was launched in conjunction with World Health Day 2010, themed "Changing Cities, Changing Lives", celebrated on April 7, 2010, in reflection of the government and private push to address health challenges and address communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.



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