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Palliative care for kids at all public hospitals

KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry will set up dedicated paediatric palliative care facilities and teams at all public hospitals to help young children with life-limiting conditions (LLC).

Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the teams would be led by paediatricians and supported by multi-disciplinary healthcare professionals.

"They will provide inpatient and outpatient care as well as daycare and home-based care.

"We will work hand in hand with Hospis Malaysia and other NGOs to promote continuous training in the field of paediatric palliative medicine for our specialists," he said after launching the National Paediatric Palliative Care Initiative at Hospis Malaysia.

Present were Raja Zarith Sofia Sultan Idris Shah of Johor and visiting British royal couple Prince William and Catherine Middleton.

Liow said LLCs were diseases that gave "no reasonable hope of cure" or



Royal treat: The Duchess of Cambridge (sitting third from right) and Raja Zarith Sofia (sitting third from left) mingling around with some of the children at Hospis Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur.

from which children die, such as cerebral palsy and HIV.

He said a 2006 study on mortality for children under five years of age showed 834 children with LLCs were in need of palliative treatment, adding that about 1,050 children were diagnosed with LLC every year.

Liow said paediatric palliative care included providing comfort and relief for the physical symptoms suffered.

There are currently 14 palliative care units for adults in public hospitals.

At another function in **PUTRAJAYA**, Liow said the National Heart Institute (IJN) was in the planning stage of expanding its capacity four-fold.

He said the waiting period at the institute currently was six months for paediatric heart patients.

"IJN can only handle around 1,000 cases a year," he said after witness-

ing the signing of an MoU between the Social Care Foundation Malaysia (SCFM) and Taipei Medical University Hospital.

Under the MoU, the hospital will for three years pay part of the cost of treating heart patients from Malaysia, chosen by the foundation.

Liow said more collaborations between local healthcare providers and overseas hospitals were necessary to handle critical cases.