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Cancer

TWENTY BREAST CANCER CLINICS TO BE SET UP BY YEAR 2000

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 10 (Bernama) -- Twenty breast cancer clinics are to be set up by the year 2000 to promote early detection and treatment of the disease among the increasing number of women.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today the ministry targetted one breast cancer clinic for every one million population. There are now 14 such clinics in the country.

From experience, breast clinics have been successful in encouraging a significant number of women to seek treatment, especially in the early stage of the disease, he told reporters after opening the pre-Congress Workshop and National Seminar On Breast Cancer here.

Prior to the setting up of breast cancer clinics in 1992, 75 percent of women who sought treatment in hospitals were in the final stage of the disease, he said. A year after the clinics were opened, the rate dropped to 42 percent.

He said breast cancer clinics offered more privacy to patients who tended to be more cooperative and better informed and, thus, more willing to participate in the treatment process.

He also said the ministry's ongoing Healthy Lifestyle Campaign had succeeded in instilling greater awareness among women to detect breast cancer early.

Statistics showed an increase in the number of breast cancer cases -- more than 3,000 patients up till November last year compared with about 2,000 in the previous year.

There were 156 deaths from breast cancer in 1995 compared with 150 in 1994. Worldwide, breast cancer killed about 250,000 women each year.

Chua said age and heredity factors contributed to breast cancer though the real cause was not known.

As such, women of all ages must be taught self-examination and encouraged to go for breast cancer screening besides seeking professional medical advice, he added.

He called on Non-Governmental Organisations and foundations to help by donating equipment for the breast clinics.

Twelve papers will be presented at the one-day seminar organised by the International College of Surgeons in conjunction with The XI Asian-Pacific Federation Congress which will be opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad later today. -- BERNAMA