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Naltrexone usage must come with proper counselling

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KUANTAN, Sun. - The use of naltrexone to treat and rehabilitate drug addicts must be complemented with proper counselling programme to make it effective.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said today without counselling, the former addicts would return to their previous condition.

"They will refuse to eat the tablets, relax, lose hope and return to their old habits," he told reporters at the end of the three-day MCA's 48th anniversary celebrations.

Naltrexone is a drug to suppress addiction to heroin and morphine.

Chua said the use of naltrexone must also be done professionally and there were procedures to be observed.

"Not everybody can dispense naltrexone. It must be done under doctors' supervision and guidance," he said.

Chua said doctors' advice and counselling must come into the picture as drug addiction had something to do with mental condition.

Yesterday, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob said a project would be launched soon in which 2,000 addicts would receive naltrexone as a substitute.

He said the National Drugs Council had decided last Friday to hasten the project and that, the council was waiting for approval from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the pills cost RM6 each and a hardcore addict would have to spend RM30 daily.

The pills would be available at specified places.

Megat Junid said the project would give parents the option to help cure their addicted children without placing the burden on the Government.

In another development, Chua said he was waiting for the Chemistry Department's report on the case where two Orang Asli children died after a mass anti-malaria exercise at Kampung Sungai Seboi, near Temerloh on Feb 18.

"Pending the submission of the report, the cause of their death cannot be determined," he said.

He expected to receive the report together with a copy of the post-mortem report within a week.

"Statements from health personnel involved in the anti-malaria exercise at the Orang Asli settlement have also been recorded," he said.

Chua urged Orang Asli to move to permanent settlements to make it easier for the ministry to open clinics close by.

He said the existing clinics could not function effectively due to the community's nomadic lifestyle.

"As a result, we have to send special teams to their settlements to provide treatment and advice on health care."

He said the ministry had plans to open more clinics near Orang Asli settlements, in line with its objective to provide health care facilities to 100 per cent of the population.

"But we need the co-operation of the community," he said.

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