

01/08/1998

`Training more doctors, nurses to cut infant mortality rate'

PORT DICKSON, Fri. - The Health Ministry hopes to reduce infant mortality rate by having more doctors and nurses familiar with paediatric resuscitation.

Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said the mortality rate among babies one-year-old and below was nine deaths in every thousand births.

He said this was an improvement over the 40 deaths in every 1,000 births in 1970.

"However, infant mortality rate in developed countries like the United States and United Kingdom was only six to seven deaths in every 1,000 births," he said.

At present, he said, there were 50 trainers from the Health Ministry conducting paediatric resuscitation courses for doctors, nurses and paramedics in government hospitals nationwide.

"More than 3,000 medical personnel have attended this course since it was introduced by the Malaysian Paediatric Association in 1994 and they are now serving at the various government hospitals," he added.

He said proper life support was sometimes critical in saving a child's life.

He said in June this year more than 1,000 children were admitted to the emergency ward of the Kuala Lumpur Hospital, half of whom required resuscitation.

Chua was speaking after opening the MPA's 20th annual congress, themed Paediatric Emergencies at the Regency Hotel and Resort today.

He also presented the Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Research Award to Dr Hasniah Abdul Latif of Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for her research into the thalassaemia carriers among secondary schoolchildren in Kuala Lumpur.

The award, introduced for the first time by MPA, is aimed at promoting research among paediatricians.

Also present were MPA president Dr Azizi Omar, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, who represented Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, State Executive Councillors Datuk Dr Yeow Chai Thiam and Datuk Goh Siow Huat.

Chua also said research in the medical field should be intensified.

"We must take steps to intensify our research in the medical field and not rely on the expertise of foreigners," he said.

He said the research conducted in foreign countries might sometimes not be relevant here due to the differences in weather and diseases.

He added diseases like diphtheria with complications leading to respiratory obstruction and myocarditis, whooping cough with bouts of hypoxia and encephalitis were now rare.

"However, there are new diseases such as the outbreak of enterovirus infection among children, which claimed 47 lives last year." For these reasons, research must be intensified to ensure local doctors were capable of handling diseases prevalent here.

(END)