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Manual on AIDS/HIV part of college syllabus

By V. Josephine

TEACHING the young about the perils of promiscuity and the dangers of AIDS/HIV is a positive step towards reducing the infection rate in Malaysia.

Firmly believing in this, the Malaysian AIDS Council and the Malaysian Association of Private Colleges and Universities (MAPCU), launched a manual, Changing Times, to integrate HIV/AIDS information into LAN (National Accreditation Board) subjects.

Accompanied by MAPCU president Tengku Shamsul Bahrin, the manual was launched by AIDS council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir at the atrium of the International Medical University at Bukit Jalil last Friday.

Marina said the manual would be a guide to private college lecturers to introduce HIV/AIDS information into subjects such as Malaysian Studies, Islamic Studies and Moral Education.

"In 2001, the Training & Education Unit of the AIDS council conducted an informal survey among college students to gauge their awareness level on the issue of HIV/AIDS.

"The results revealed that the students lacked the information necessary to protect themselves from HIV/AIDS as well as to make informed decisions pertaining to their sexual health. It was decided that a more concerted effort was needed to reach out to these students," said Marina adding that public universities could approach the council or MAPCU for assistance.

She said youths aged between 20 and 29, formed 40 per cent of the HIV/AIDS infection rates in Malaysia and that as end of 2003, about 6,756 new cases were detected with 700 deaths recorded.

Work on the manual started in 2001, with a workshop to gauge the views of LAN subject lecturers on the development and feasibility of the manual.

Based on the feedback, it was deemed that three LAN subjects were the most appropriate to integrate information on HIV/AIDS.

Monash University lecturer Dr Yeoh Seng Guan, who was formerly with the Sunway College when the manual was being developed, related his experience with students when the HIV/AIDS syllabus was incorporated in their studies.

"The syllabus on HIV/AIDS was taught under Moral Education and I found that the majority did not like the topic. The inclusion is to basically empower the students on what is HIV/AIDS is all about and to test their knowledge on the issue and their understanding of it.

"A question or two may be included in the examination but it is all about attitude, lifestyle and relationships. Students need not worry as it is part of the syllabus and not an additional topic," he said.

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