

Come in early for treatment for better survival chances, says Health DG

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CORONAVIRUS | Those with symptoms of Covid-19 including difficulty in breathing should visit a hospital early for better chances of survival, said Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah.

He told a press conference in Putrajaya today that one of the main reasons for the 15 deaths in Malaysia linked to the virus was due to the victims coming for treatment when they were already in the late stages of the illness.

According to Noor Hisham, there were five stages of Covid-19 infection with those in Stage 3 developing some form of pneumonia while those in Stage 4 were those already suffering breathing difficulty and in need of oxygen support.

The next stage, or Stage 5, were patients who could no longer breathe well and had to be intubated and put on ventilators.

"Most came to us at Stage 3, when they already have difficulty in breathing. For example, the last patient (who died) came to us after having symptoms of breathing difficulties over the past three days and in need of oxygen supplement.

"This is one of the contributions to fatality, because of delayed presentation to hospital," he said.

The early stages of the virus infection are Stage 1, where a patient is positive but does not show any symptom, and Stage 2 when a person is positive but only showing mild symptoms.

Do not stigmatise the tabligh members but help them

As of noon today, Malaysia recorded a total of 1,624 positive Covid-19 cases, including 15 deaths.

From the 15, nine of the deceased were connected to the cluster of tabligh gathering at a mosque in Sri Petaling.

According to Noor Hisham, most of the patients from the tabligh cluster who died due to the virus had come to seek medical attention at "a very late stage".

He also stressed that there are other contributors to the mortality rate related to Covid-19 in the country.

He said several cases had comorbidity (other illnesses) and non-communicable diseases.

Old age was also another factor that increases the risk of fatality in Covid-19 infection.

Noor Hisham said many of those who died were more than 70-years-old.

Meanwhile, on the tabligh cluster being the largest with 986 cases, or 60 per cent from the total number of positive patients, Noor Hisham stressed that the public should not stigmatise the group.

He said they should be helped, instead of being discriminated.

"Do not blame the tabligh group. Do not discriminate them, do not stigmatise them.

"What is important now is to help curb the spread of this virus among the tabligh community and their close contacts," Noor Hisham said.

Congregational prayers cancelled to break chain of infection

Noor Hisham also spoke about the chain of infection in the country, which he said they were hoping to break with the enforcement of the movement control order (MCO).

He said the current surge of cases were the result of infections that happened about two weeks ago.

According to Noor Hisham, this was the reason why the ministry and religious authorities came up with guidelines to discourage congregational prayers at mosques, which was to break the infection trend.

"Two weeks ago, we have seen infections in the community. If you see two weeks ago, we tried our best to curb the infection among the community (of Muslims), for example.

"Among them (initiative) was the muzakarah to postpone congregational prayers, because the infection was spread by tabligh members, and we know they go from house to house, and they will perform prayers in mosques.

"This is what we did two weeks ago. What we see now may be the result of what

happened two weeks ago," he said.

He said the MCO, between March 18 and March 31, should prevent an increase of cases in the next two weeks, if strictly enforced.

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