

Government to launch a campaign to fight vaccine misinformation

Malaysiakini

27 November 2020

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said the government will launch an advocacy campaign to fight vaccine misinformation as the country prepares to roll out its Covid-19 immunisation drive.

At a press conference in Putrajaya today, he cited a YouGov survey stating that 82 percent of Malaysian respondents are ready to receive a Covid-19 vaccine.

Nevertheless, he said, he views the vaccine hesitancy movement seriously.

“We know they may be deliberately spreading inaccurate information to influence parents and the society.

“That’s why the strategy we have taken to tackle such movements is firstly, at the national and stage levels, to strengthen advocacy to explain why we need a vaccination campaign,” Muhyiddin said.

He explained that the government would be campaigning through the media, as well by way of as health education initiatives such as talks and seminars.

The government will also be working with various groups to broaden its reach and educate people on the importance of the Covid-19 vaccination.

“So, there will be many measures taken so that more will understand why they should be involved in this effort to tackle the pandemic through vaccination,” he said.

To a question, the prime minister dismissed claims that Malaysia’s frontliners are being treated like “laboratory mice” by being first in line to receive the first batch of vaccines available in Malaysia.

He pointed out that Pfizer’s Covid-19 vaccine has already been administered to 43,998 participants in its clinical trials around the world.

For the 12 vaccines around the world that are currently in Phase III trials, there are a total of 500,000 participants involved.

“All data obtained from these clinical trials will be evaluated by international bodies such as the World Health Organization, the US Food and Drug

Administration and the European Medicines Agency.

“In Malaysia, the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency under the Health Ministry will also be studying the data to ensure it is safe to be taken by Malaysians,” he said.

For the record, clinical trials are broadly divided into three stages.

Phase I trial (also known as safety trials or first-in-human) typically involves tens of healthy volunteers to help spot obvious safety issues.

Phase II trial usually involves hundreds of participants and is typically used to determine the necessary dosage and further test drug safety.

Phase III trial is used to assess a drug’s efficacy and help spot rare side effects.

It is the last phase before the vaccine can be considered for marketing approval by regulators, and typically involves thousands or tens of thousands of participants in multiple locations.

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