

SARAWAK HEAR TO BE LAUNCHED OCT 2

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KUCHING: Sarawak Hearing and Aural Rehabilitation Society (Sarawak Hear), a non-governmental organisation (NGO), will be officially launched at 10am on Oct 2 at the auditorium of the Old Court House here.

Sarawak Hear president Dr Tang Ing Ping said the NGO was set up to support individuals with hearing impairment, their families as well as their support groups who use verbal communication as their main means of communicating.

“At the moment, we already have 40 members. They are those with hearing disability, their parents and their support groups. Then we also have members from the medical fraternity such as speech therapists and trainers,” said Dr Tang, who is also ENT specialist of Sarawak General Hospital.

Dr Tang, who is also Associate Professor of Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), said Sarawak Hear was registered with the Registrar of Societies in April and the launch in October is to officially introduce the NGO to the public.

“In the last two years, we have been doing a lot for those with impaired hearing. For example, we have started installing cochlear implants for children with hearing disability. Two months ago, we started with adults. We did the first two

cases of Auditory Brainstem Implants (ABI) System implantation for two Neurofibromatosis Type 2 (NF2) adult patients.”

He explained that installation of hearing aid implants is just the beginning of the process for hearing impaired individuals to start learning how to talk or hear.

“After the installation of these hearing aid implants, it does not mean that the story ends here. In fact, this is just the beginning. Whether those who have the implants installed can later pick up speech skills or not very much depends on speech therapy and the training that follows. So it is crucial that after the implant surgeries, these hearing impaired continue to be monitored and they continue to come for speech therapy and training.

“And whether they can follow up with the speech therapy sessions depends on their families or their support system. That has been one of the reasons for us to set up the society. We hope Sarawak Hear will provide a platform for the loved ones of the hearing impaired individuals to meet. They can share experiences, learn from

each other and encourage each other.

“Family support or a support group has been most crucial in helping those with hearing impairment to get back to society to lead a normal life,” Dr Tang told The Borneo Post yesterday.

On the professional side, he said there is a need for local specialists and surgeons involved in high risk surgeries to be given proper training.

He cited the installation surgery of ABI on the NF2 adult patients which involved surgical risks and complications as an example of cases which had to be done by trained neurosurgeons and skull-based surgeons.