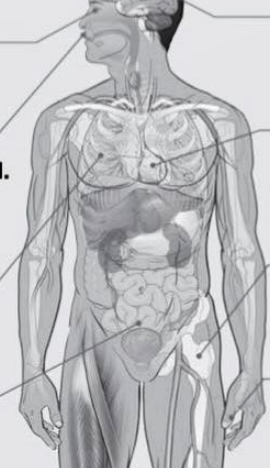


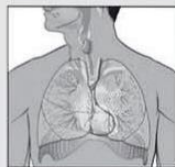
Effects of smoking on your body

Smoking causes or increases your risk of:

- 
- **Macular degeneration.**
 - **Cataracts.**
 - **Vision loss.**
 - **Reduced taste and smell.**
 - **Tooth staining.**
 - **Tooth decay.**
 - **Gum disease.**
 - **Frequent infections.**
 - **COPD.**
 - **Erectile dysfunction.**
 - **Infertility.**
 - **Anxiety.**
 - **Depression.**
 - **Irritability.**
 - **Blood clots.**
 - **Heart attack.**
 - **Stroke.**
 - **Bone fractures.**
 - **Osteoporosis.**
 - **Premature aging.**
 - **Yellow nails.**
 - **Wrinkles.**



- **Miscarriage.**
- **Birth defects.**
- **Developmental delays.**



- **Lung, oral, laryngeal and other cancers.**

 Cleveland Clinic

Light up at your own peril

BY NURFARAHIN OKI & EDWINNIE
EINSTEIN UNJI

KUCHING: Usage of tobacco has picked up since World War II and since then cigarettes containing tobacco have been available worldwide in one form or another.

Public Health Physician Associate Professor Dr Helmy Hazmi said tobacco is the only legal consumer product that kills up to half of its users when used exactly as intended by the manufacturer and smoking is responsible for one third of cancer deaths globally.

Dr Helmy who is currently working at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) shared his insights with New Sarawak Tribune on the impacts of tobacco to human health and the environment as well as alternatives for smokers to stop tobacco usage.



DR Helmy

where almost every part of the body can be impacted by tobacco.

Nicotine can stain the mouth and fingers and the breath of tobacco users can smell bad.

Tobacco causes narrowing and hardening of the blood vessels to the heart and brain, leading to heart attacks and strokes and are already the leading causes of death in Malaysia as we speak.

Smoking could also damage the lungs, causing Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (COLD), which is incurable, and the sufferers depend on bronchodilators to help them breathe.

The immune system will be suppressed and makes our body more vulnerable to harmful bacteria and viruses which then delays wound healing.

Patients with reflux diseases or GERD, and stomach ulcers would know that they need to avoid smoking to improve their symptoms.

To have strong bones at old age, you need to stop smoking now to at least delay osteoporosis.

For those planning to have children,

Why has smoking always been associated with lung cancer?

Scientific studies have consistently shown a strong link between smoking and cancer across different research efforts.

From a biological and molecular understanding, tobacco, as a carcinogen, initiates cancer by damaging DNA, and alters proto-oncogenes and tumour suppressor genes, leading to the uncontrolled growth of normal cells into cancer cells.

The clear sequence of event shows that more exposure to tobacco will lead to higher risk of cancer cell growth.

How precisely does tobacco smoking impact different parts of the body, aside from the well-known problems like lung cancer?

The list is endless. Let's go by the system

Sibu to observe World Blood Donor Day on June 9

SIBU: Malaysian Red Crescent Society (MRCS) Sibu Branch in collaboration with Sibu General Hospital will organise World Blood Donor Day 2024 at Kingwood Hotel (Level 5, Rinwood Hall) here on Sunday.

Organising committee chairperson, Dr Rachel Teng said, in conjunction with the celebration, side activities will also be undertaken in cooperation with non-governmental bodies, political parties and private pharmacies to make it a success.

She revealed that among those

involved are the Lions Club of Sibu Loving Care, Lions Club of Sibu Berjaya, Lions Club of Sibu Queensway, Sri Minyak Group, Methodist Pilley Institute Alumni, PDP (Progressive Democratic Party) Bawang Assan, United Buddhist Association Sibu, KRT (Kawasan Rukun Tetangga) Sungai Empawah, Mytown Pharmacy and Alpro Pharmacy.

"The activities to be carried out will encompass health check-ups, blood donation campaign, colouring competition, organ donation recruitment drive and so

on for the celebration," she said on Wednesday.

Earlier, she chaired a meeting of the organising committee which was also attended by MRCS Sibu branch chairman, Penghulu Chua Hiong Kee, MRCS Sibu branch adviser, Datuk Lau Ngie Hua and Sibu General Hospital director Dr Nanthakumar Thirunavukkarasu.

Dr Teng who is also the vice chairperson of MRCS Sibu branch said the theme for this year is '20 Years Of Celebrating Giving: Thank You, Blood Donors'.

According to the World Health

Organisation (WHO), the specific objective of this year's campaign is to thank and recognise the millions of voluntary blood donors who have contributed to the health and well-being of millions of people around the world.

"It is also to showcase the achievements and challenges of the national blood programmes and to share best practices and lessons learned.

"Furthermore, it is to highlight the continuous need for regular, unpaid blood donation to achieve universal access to safe blood

transfusion.

"We also want to promote a culture of regular blood donation among the youth and the public, and increase the diversity and sustainability of the blood donor pool," she said.

She said that all the activities would be carried out simultaneously from 8am to 12 noon.

Dr Teng added that Dewan Rakyat deputy speaker, Alice Lau, who is also Lanang Member of Parliament is expected to be present to officiate at the event at 10 am.

smoking increases the risk of erectile dysfunction, can reduce sperm count, damages the genetic properties of the sperm, and negatively affects hormone production.

Expectant mothers who smoke or who inhale second-hand smoke are putting their unborn children at risk of stillbirth and premature birth, leading to low birth weight that leads to many complications for the baby.

Babies born may be at risk of cleft palates and sudden infant death syndromes, and smoke from tobacco products could also cause or aggravate children's asthma.

What are the environmental consequences of tobacco waste?

Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and only 38 per cent of it decomposes after two years or so.

Second, they contain high amounts of tar and heavy metals that are known to be carcinogens or cancer-causing and it can seep into the ground and contaminate our water, enter our food chain, and finally reach us humans in very high concentrations because we are sitting on top of the food chain. This is called biomagnification.

How do tobacco cultivation and production affect local ecosystems and biodiversity in tobacco-growing regions?

Tobacco farming is often done on a massive scale and its plantation is not rotated with other crops, making it vulnerable to pests.

Hence, more chemicals, especially highly toxic ones, are needed to control pests and prevent diseases in tobacco plants.

Deforestation is also another issue with tobacco plantation as in tobacco growing countries, tobacco plantation accounts for five per cent of the national deforestation.

In Malaysia, tobacco farming is insignificant, and we have the lowest hectareage of tobacco plantation in Southeast Asia.

What do you envision for the future of tobacco control efforts?

We may have missed the opportunity to



implement the Generational End Game (GEG) after it was decoupled from the Smoking Products for Public Health Bill.

I believe that the GEG was a game changer for the smoking problem in Malaysia in many ways.

Moving on, we need to think of ways to enhance the MPOWER package underlined in the WHO's FCTC framework, to which Malaysia is a party.

MPOWER stands for Monitoring tobacco use, Protecting people from tobacco, Offering smoking cessation, Warning dangers of tobacco especially to the new generation, Enforcing rulings against tobacco advertising and sponsorship, and Raising taxes on tobacco.

In addition, I hope that we will ultimately reach the point where we have the political will to put health first at the forefront.

That will be the first step in many initiatives to halt the smoking menace in the community.

How does smokeless tobacco (such as chewing tobacco) affect health?

Smokeless tobacco is not too different from the conventional cigarette, and they still contain harmful heavy metals and nicotine that cause cancer and addiction, respectively.

Smokeless tobacco exposes the user to at least 25 known carcinogens, especially the tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs) which are commonly linked to the mouth, the oesophagus and pancreatic cancer.

Just like cigarette smoking, the risk

for stroke and heart disease in pregnant mothers is the same.

In your opinion, what are the safer alternative versions of tobacco products?

There is none. Saying that an alternative is safer is just humbug to justify the use of tobacco.

This should not be confused with Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), which is intended to gradually reduce nicotine dependence and is used temporarily.

What are the ways that someone can help themselves to stop smoking?

First of all, the smoker needs to acknowledge that they have a smoking problem.

That is why continuous health promotion is important to provide them with awareness. There are many entry points to seek help.

Go to your local pharmacy or also check in at the local MoH's health clinic for advice.

Other options include calling the quitline for smoking cessation at 03-88834400 or registering at <https://jomquit.com/> to get help.

Doing it with the help of professionals is the best, and coupled with sheer determination, it could ensure a higher chance of success.

Stopping smoking cold turkey has been shown to be associated with a higher risk of failure.

WMO succeeds in reducing dengue cases

KUALA LUMPUR: Wolbachia Mosquito Operations (WMO), an initiative by the Health Ministry to combat dengue transmission which started in 2019, has succeeded in reducing the number of dengue cases between 45 and 100 per cent in 19 assessable release localities.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Lukanisman Awang Sauni said the country has achieved a significant decline in dengue case fatality rate (CFR) from 0.63 per cent in 2000 to 0.08 per cent last year, with rigorous and continuous effort at various levels involving national, state and district stakeholders.

"To date, a total of 35 localities have implemented WMO nationwide," he said when launching the 7th Asia Dengue Summit (ADS) here yesterday.

He said in addition, the Communication for Behavioural Impact (COMBI) programme has been adopted in 3,380 localities with more than 32,163 active members nationwide to facilitate community mobilisation for dengue prevention activities.

"We look forward to dengue vaccine to curb the disease transmission and will continue to seek more evidence to ensure this vaccine would eventually complement our effort to prevent, manage, and control dengue in accordance to the country's dengue burden and World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendations," he added.

Lukanisman said that in just two decades, the number of dengue cases worldwide has grown thirteen fold from 500,000 in 2000 to a whopping 6.5 million in 2023.

He said most of the increase is attributed to Malaysia and other Asian countries such as Thailand, Bangladesh, Vietnam and Indonesia.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic, we were happy to see a significant drop in dengue cases due to movement restrictions. Unfortunately, the shrinkage was temporary. As the world returned to normalcy, dengue cases went up again.

"Indeed, 2023 marked the highest number of cases ever recorded globally, surpassing the unprecedented peak of 2019. With over 6.5 million cases and more than 7,300 dengue-related deaths reported by the WHO, the urgency of our collective response cannot be disputed," he said.

With the theme "Towards Zero Dengue Deaths: Innovation, Collaboration, Action in Asia", the three-day summit gathered over 450 leading dengue experts from 20 countries including clinicians, academia researchers, public health leaders and policymakers to exchange ideas, updates, and achievements on dengue prevention and control.

The summit is co-convened by Asia Dengue Voice and Action (ADVA) Group and Dengue Prevention Advocacy Malaysia (DPAM), among many other public health associations and groups. - BERNAMA



SEATED from left, Lau, Dr Nanthakumar, Dr Teng and Chua with other organising committee members all gear up for the event.