

Pasar raya didenda RM15,000 jual terung beracun

Kuala Terengganu: Angkara menjual terung panjang dengan kandungan racun perosak melebihi tahap dibenarkan, sebuah pasar raya dari Hulu Terengganu, didenda RM15,000 oleh Mahkamah Sesyen di sini, semalam.

Hakim, Mohd Zul Zakiquudin Zulkifli, membuat keputusan itu selepas wakil pasar raya terbabit membuat pengakuan bersalah.

Mengikut pertuduhan, jam 4.30 petang pada 25 Mei lalu, anggota Pejabat Kesihatan Daerah Hulu Terengganu (PKDHT) menjalankan aktiviti persampelan makanan di

pasar raya itu bagi tujuan analisis mengikut Seksyen 5(2) Akta Makanan 1983.

Selepas mendapat keizinan pihak pasar raya, anggota PKDHT memilih dan mengambil terung panjang seberat kira-kira 1.2 kilogram yang dibayar pada harga RM7.30 sebagai sampel bagi tujuan analisa kimia.

Hasil analisa Makmal Keselamatan dan Kualiti Makanan Pahang mendapati sampel terung panjang itu dikesan mengandungi Carben-dazim iaitu sejenis residul racun perosak pada tahap 0.02mg/kg, se-

kali gus gagal mematuhi Peraturan 41(3)/(c), Peraturan-Peraturan Makanan 1985.

Berikutan itu, pasar raya terbabit didakwa melakukan kesalahan mengikut Seksyen 13(1) Akta Makanan 1983 yang boleh dihukum mengikut seksyen sama, yang jika disabitkan kesalahan boleh didenda sehingga RM100,000 atau penjara sehingga sepuluh tahun atau keduanya.

Pendakwaan dikendalikan Pegawai Pendakwa KKM, Alias Awang Kechik, manakala pasar raya tidak diwakili peguam.

Long working hours, little to no exercise, fast food and late nights have become a way of life for many men. While these habits may seem harmless, they are quietly shaping a worrying trend. According to the Malaysia National Cancer Registry Report 2017-2021, the lifetime risk of Malaysian men developing cancer has increased from one in 10 to one in 11, with colorectal, lung and prostate cancers leading the list.

While genetics play a role, lifestyle choices remain the strongest factor. Only about 5-10% of cancers are hereditary. That means for the majority, daily habits such as what we eat, how active we are and commitment to screenings make the biggest difference.

Habits turn harmful when lifestyles take a toll

The pace of modern living often drives habits that quietly undermine long-term health. Reliance on processed food, extended hours of sitting and limited physical activity have become the norm of daily life for many men.

This lack in movement, contributes to obesity and promotes chronic inflammation and increases insulin levels in the body, over time. These changes can damage cells, disrupt hormone balance and create conditions that encourage tumour growth.

Diets high in processed foods and saturated fats further elevate cancer risk, resulting in the effects of physical inactivity being compounded. Despite this, many of these silent health patterns continue unchecked, as men often dismiss early symptoms or assume they will resolve on their own.

This reluctance to act early is often rooted in social stigma rather than lack of awareness. Many men associate medical consultations with weakness or embarrassment, especially when it involves sensitive topics such as urinary or reproductive health.

Understanding leading cancers affecting men

The three cancers most common among Malaysian men are colorectal, prostate and lung.

Colorectal cancer can start as a small growth called polyps in the lining of the colon, resulting in some polyps turning cancerous in five to 10

Eating red meat, smoking raising cancer risk among men

► Lifestyle choices remain vital to cancer, disease circumvention

years. Furthermore, diets lacking fibre, frequent intake of red and processed meats and limited physical activity increases this risk, but a healthier way of eating and regular screenings makes prevention possible.

A colonoscopy can detect cancer at an early stage, significantly improving the outcome. While early screening is vital, prevention begins with dietary and lifestyle choices.

A systematic review based on the Clinical Practice Guideline on colorectal cancer showed that increased intake of 100g per day of red meat and 25g per day of processed meat were the leading risk factors. The cancer can be alleviated by lowering consumption of meat, while smoking further contributes to a 16% greater risk of developing the cancer, due to cigarettes carrying a carcinogenic quality.

The same habits that harm digestive health also affect the lungs. Smoking, in particular, exposes the body to thousands of detrimental chemicals that trigger chronic inflammation and damage DNA. These changes increase the likelihood of lung cancer, which is one of the deadliest cancers among men, over time. With 95.4% of lung cancer cases are diagnosed late, many patients tend to dismiss early symptoms such as cough or fatigue until the disease has reached a stage that is advanced.

When it comes to prostate cancer, awareness remains low and many cases are only detected after symptoms appear. It often develops slowly and may mimic benign prostatic hyperplasia or commonly known as prostate enlargement symptoms such as difficulty to pass urine, weak stream or frequent



Avoiding smoking also helps the body repair DNA damage more efficiently.

urination, leading men to overlook the early warning signs and assume that it is not a serious condition.

Prostate cancer is more commonly diagnosed in men aged above 50, and those taking testosterone supplements face a risk that is higher. Most patients remain asymptomatic in the early stages and typically present with bone pain or neurological symptoms, only once the cancer has spread often and it is often unstoppable.

Screening with the Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test helps to identify risk long before symptoms occur, allowing doctors to monitor gradual changes in PSA levels and decide if further imaging such as CT or MRI is needed. Annual PSA testing from ages 40 to 50 is recommended for those on testosterone supplements, with a family history of cancer or carrying the BRCA2 gene.

While screening plays a vital role and timely treatment remains key to improving survival, in about 95% of cases, early detection improves the quality of life by extending life expectancy for up to 15 years.

Taking charge of health through circumvention and early action

Although cancer risk rises with age, many of its causes remain within one's control. Circumvention begins with small habits that are sustainable. Maintaining a balanced diet with more vegetables, fruits and whole grains while cutting down on processed and red meats can reduce inflammation and support healthy cell function.

Healthy choices made consistently over time protect the body against cancer development. Exercising can reduce inflammation that may help with cancer neutralisation. Even simple actions such as exercising, managing stress, staying hydrated and sleeping well can make a difference to overall health.

Awareness must go hand in hand with regular screening. Men are encouraged to undergo annual health screenings that include blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose, BMI and cancer marker tests. Screenings such as colonoscopy every 10 years from age 45 onwards and low-dose CT scans for long-term smokers can detect abnormalities before symptoms appear.

Cancer among Malaysian men continues to rise, but much of it can be prevented through healthier daily choices, timely screening and

awareness. Screening finds cancer in its earliest stages, when it is potentially treatable and survival rates are significantly higher. The most effective defences against colorectal, lung and prostate cancers, remain regular exercise, balanced eating, quitting smoking and early detection.

This article is contributed by Sunway Medical Centre Velocity consultant clinical oncologist Dr Hafizah Zaharah Ahmad and consultant urologist Dr Goh Cheng Hood.

LIFE-SAVING MEDICATION CARE PROGRAMME TO SUPPORT FLOOD VICTIMS NATIONWIDE

Alpro Pharmacy has activated their life-saving medication care programme, which provides a one-time supply of up to seven days of chronic medication to verified victims of flood victims at no cost. The initiative is fully subsidised by the Alpro Foundation. Flood conditions bring a heightened risk of infectious diseases as well as complications for patients who have been ill long-term. When floodwaters rise, the risks of leptospirosis, cholera, dengue and various skin infections increase significantly due to the rapid breeding of mosquitoes, reduced sanitation and the quality of water. Patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart conditions are at much higher risk if disrupted treatment is a big part of their reality. It is vital for them to remain on their medications. Flood victims who require chronic medication may visit any of Alpro Pharmacy's 300 outlets nationwide. A police report regarding the flood incident is required for verification.

TREATMENT HANDBOOK AIMS TO ENHANCE PATIENT JOURNEY THROUGH EDUCATION

MSD and the Lung Cancer Network Malaysia, a multidisciplinary network of lung cancer specialists and professionals, has launched the country's first comprehensive Lung Cancer Immunotherapy Treatment Diary, designed to help lung cancer patients understand their diagnosis, learn about their treatment options and take an active role in their care journey. The diary is designed to support patients not just during hospital visits, but throughout their daily lives. By providing a tool patients can reference at home, the diary extends the care conversation beyond clinic or hospital visits and helps patients stay connected to their treatment goals between appointments. It will be distributed free of charge to lung cancer patients at participating hospitals and clinics nationwide. Lung cancer is the second most common cancer in Malaysian men, with an incidence rate of 13.2 per 100,000. It is also the fourth most common cancer among women, with an incidence rate of 5.9 per 100,000. Nearly 95% of lung cancer cases are detected at advanced stages.



Prostate cancer is more commonly diagnosed in adult men. Men should not wait for pain or discomfort before taking action. Early detection makes treatment simpler, recovery faster and outcomes far better.

RESearchers have warned that rising global consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) poses a major threat to health, calling for countries to subject some products made by large food companies to marketing restrictions and taxes.

The international team of researchers also pushed back against criticism of their work on UPFs, saying efforts to "manufacture scientific doubt" on the subject were similar to tactics used by the tobacco industry.

There has been intense debate in scientific circles about UPFs, with some health and nutrition experts raising concerns that the term is vaguely defined and that more research is needed.

However, leading UPF researchers argued in *The Lancet* medical journal that those foods present too great a danger to wait any longer, calling for action.

In the first of three papers, the researchers reviewed 104 previous studies, demonstrating that eating a diet with a lot of UPFs is linked to a higher risk of a range of diseases, including obesity, diabetes, heart problems and early death.

The second paper showed that the consumption of UPFs is increasing around the world — and already represents more than half of all calories eaten in the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom.

The third blamed a handful of massive corporations for altering global diets in recent decades by using aggressive marketing to sell products made with cheap ingredients and industrial methods.



The authors called for nations to introduce warnings on package labels and restrict marketing — particularly advertisements aimed at children. *Picture: Chris Renshaw*

Ultra-processed foods a rising threat

Eight UPF manufacturers — Nestlé, PepsiCo, Unilever, Coca-Cola Danone, Fomento Economico Mexicano, Mondelez and Kraft Heinz — accounted for 42 per cent of the sector's US\$1.5 trillion in assets in 2021, the paper said.

The authors called for nations to introduce warnings on package labels, restrict marketing — particularly advertisements aimed at children — and tax certain UPFs, using the money to make fresh food more affordable for low-income households.

ARE THERE HEALTHY UPFS?

The researchers said they welcomed "valid scientific criticism" of the *Novo* classification system developed by Brazilian epidemiologist Carlos Monteiro, the lead author of the first study.

The *Novo* system, which separates food into four categories from the least to most processed, has come under scrutiny for not taking into account nutrients known to be unhealthy such as fat, salt and sugar.

This has meant that food traditionally thought to be healthy — such as free-range poultry, plant-based milks



Researchers say rising global consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) poses a major threat to health. *Picture: Chris Renshaw*

and some breads and canned vegetables — could be considered ultra-processed.

The researchers acknowledged the important role played by fat, salt and sugar, calling for future research to isolate the effect of ultra-processing in foods such as flavoured and plain yoghurts.

Almost all existing UPF research reviewed by the team was observational, which means it cannot directly establish cause and effect.

The precise mechanism for how UPFs cause such a wide range of health problems also remains unclear.

The researchers laid out numerous theories, including that UPFs contain a higher density of calories than fresh food, provide overeating by combining elements such as fat and sugar, can be consumed more quickly because they are softer, or potentially contain harmful additives.

'BEYOND TIME TO ACT'

Chris van Tulleken, a co-author of the second paper and author of the best-selling book *Ultra-Processed People*,

warned scientists who have criticised UPF research of often having ties to the food industry.

"We see tobacco industry tactics playing out this morning in fact, while we're on this call," he told an online press conference on Tuesday.

The second paper's lead author, Philip Baker of the University of Sydney, accused the UPF industry of "hijacking the scientists, and the science attempting to manufacture scientific doubt".

Kingston University London nutritionist Hilma Mulrenney, not involved in the research, said the team made a compelling case.

"Clearly the authors of these papers are predisposed in favour of *Novo* as not they created it," she said, adding that more research is needed to identify the exact mechanisms that UPFs could be causing harm.

However, "given the disproportionate risks of chronic disease to the most disadvantaged groups and the costs of a poor diet to individuals, healthcare systems and finances, it is beyond time to act" on UPFs, she said.

Treatment diary helps patients weather lung cancer episode

NAVIGATING cancer treatment can be a scary and bewildering experience for patients.

To ensure patients are better prepared to face the myriad of challenges that come with treatment, MSD and the Lung Cancer Network Malaysia (LCNM) have launched the country's first comprehensive Lung Cancer Immunotherapy (IO) Treatment Diary.

The diary is designed to help lung cancer patients understand their diagnosis, learn about their treatment options and take an active role in their care journey.

Lung cancer is the second most common cancer among Malaysian men, and the fourth most common among women. However, nearly 95 per cent of lung cancer cases are only detected at advanced stages.

The diary helps to complete the continuum of lung cancer care, says clinical oncologist and president of the Lung Cancer Network Malaysia Dr Tho Lye Mun.

"It puts patients in control, helping them become active partners in their care rather than passive recipients. When patients understand their treatment journey and can communicate effectively with their healthcare team, the outcome can relatively improve," he adds.

The diary not only educates patients about their condition and treatment options but also enhances their journey

by empowering them to be champions of their own health and work alongside their doctors.

Immunotherapy (IO) is one of the treatment options for many lung cancer patients. The diary provides patients with educational resources and practical tools to understand how this treatment works, what to expect during their journey, and how to communicate effectively with their medical team.

Developed through a collaboration between lung cancer specialists from the Lung Cancer Network Malaysia and MSD, the diary acts as a resource that addresses real patient needs and includes weekly symptom tracking pages with visual indicators for affected body systems and educational content explaining how cancer treatment works in plain language.

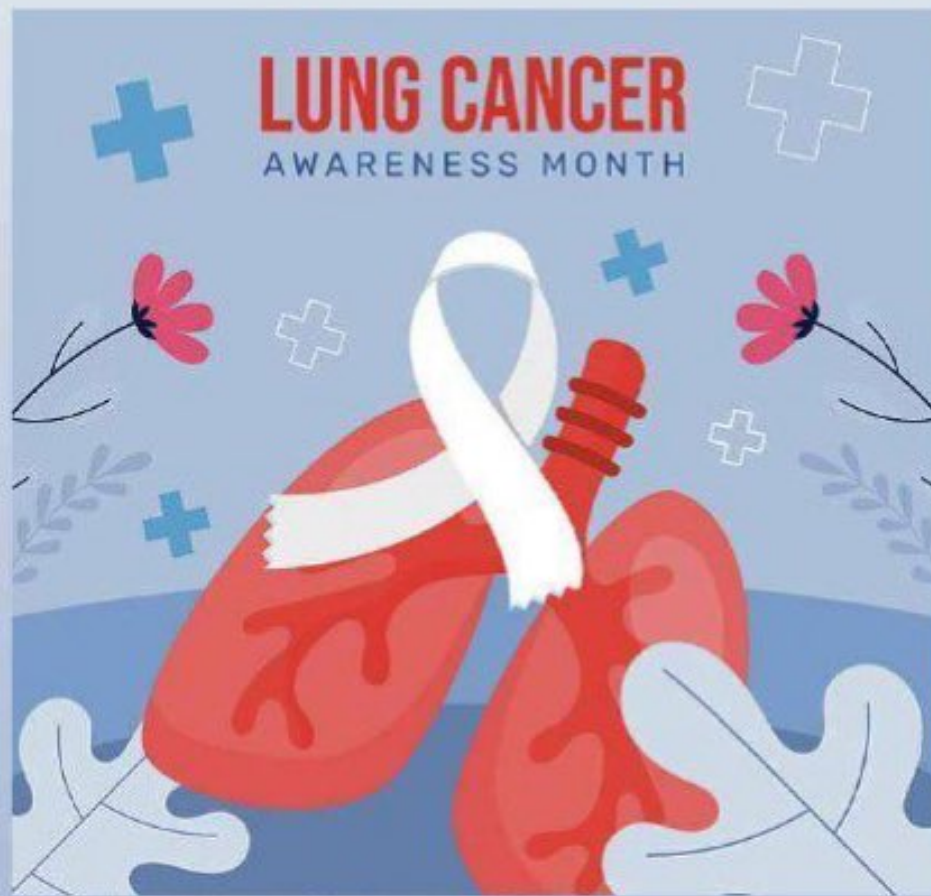
It also includes side effect recognition guides that show warning signs for different organs.

"We've taken complex medical information and translated it into something practical that patients can actually use," says Dr Tho.

Every page serves a purpose, he adds, whether it's helping a patient to understand their treatment or giving them confidence to ask questions at their next appointment.

The diary will be distributed free of charge to lung cancer patients at participating hospitals and clinics nationwide.

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The majority of lung cancer cases in Malaysia are detected at a late stage. PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK

By CAMILLA FOSTER

IN today's fast-paced world, junk food is more accessible and enticing than ever, which has led to increased efforts to reduce the promotion of unhealthy food and drink.

While the occasional treat is part of a balanced life, children can sometimes display subtle signs of a deeper, more problematic relationship with unhealthy foods.

Recognising the warning signs early is the first step toward helping your child build a healthier, more balanced relationship with food.

Here are five red flags that may indicate a junk-food addiction, and some expert advice on what you can do to help.

> Intense cravings beyond hunger

"One key sign is intense craving beyond hunger. So, the child fixates on specific foods (such as crisps or sweets) and becomes distressed if denied access," highlights Dr Manpreet Dhuffar-Pottiwai, chartered psychologist and specialist in behavioural addictions.

> Loss of control

"This is the inability to stop eating junk food even when full, often in secret or past the point of discomfort," says Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Withdrawal-like symptoms

Irritability, mood swings, or headaches when junk food is unavailable is another red flag to look out for, adds the psychologist.

> Neglect of healthier options

"Persistent refusal of balanced meals or previously enjoyed whole foods could also be a sign," notes Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Impact on daily life

"Look out for avoidance of social activities, declining school performance, or guilt/shame about eating habits," advises Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

What role does dopamine or brain chemistry play in how children respond to junk food?

"When children or adults consume junk food, the high levels of sugar, fat, and salt stimulate the release of dopamine in the brain – a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward," explains Dr Adarsh Dharendra, consultant psychiatrist at Priory's Life

Works hospital and Priory Hospital Woking.

"This surge creates a temporary sense of satisfaction, reinforcing the idea of food as a 'feel-good factor'. Over time, the brain begins to crave more of these foods to achieve the same high, laying the foundation for compulsive eating."

Are particular types of junk food more addictive than others for kids?

"Processed foods engineered to maximise 'bliss points', such as crisps, chocolate, sugary cereals, and fast food are particularly problematic," warns Dhuffar-Pottiwai. "These items combine refined carbohydrates, fats, and artificial additives, disrupting satiety signals."

This visual is human-created, AI-aided.

Addicted to junk food

Some children develop problematic relationships with processed food with signs like intense cravings, loss of control and withdrawal-like symptoms.

How can a junk-food addiction affect a child's physical and mental health?

"If left unchecked, these habits may escalate into full-blown binge eating disorder, disrupting daily life and contributing to low self-esteem, especially in the context of weight gain," says Dr Dharendra. "Individuals may experience irritability, mood swings

and a loss of control around food."

How can parents distinguish normal cravings from problematic behaviours?

"Cravings are normal; context determines pathology," says Dhuffar-Pottiwai. "Key red flags include frequency/intensity such as daily distress over accessing junk food and functional

impairment such as skipping activities or lying to obtain treats. Using food to self-soothe during stress could also be a red flag."

If this is an issue that your child is struggling with, don't worry, we are here to help. Here are some tips on how to help children overcome an obsession with junk food and make healthier choices.

> Model balanced behaviours

"Intergenerationally, parents' own eating habits and emotional associations with food (eg, using snacks as rewards) can normalise dysfunctional behaviours," says Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

"Children mimic caregivers, so avoid labelling foods as 'good' or 'bad'."

> Create structure

"Offer regular, balanced meals to prevent extreme hunger," advises Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Involve your child

"Collaborate on meal planning or cooking to build autonomy and curiosity," recommends Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Gradual changes

"Replace ultra-processed snacks with minimally processed alternatives," suggests Dhuffar-Pottiwai. "For example, offer fruit with nut butter instead of sweets."

> Address emotional needs

"Teach non-food coping strategies such as mindfulness, meditation as a family or creative play," recommends Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Environmental tweaks

"Limit junk food availability at home (eg, having sweet snacks out of reach) rather than outright bans, which can backfire," advises Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

> Be compassionate

"Compassion is key for parents and children alike," says Dhuffar-Pottiwai. "Frame any changes as promoting well-being, not punishment. Intergenerational patterns take time to unlearn and small, consistent steps yield sustainable progress."

> Seek help

"I would recommend consulting a GP or paediatrician if physical health markers (eg, weight, blood sugar) are concerning, if behaviours persist despite home interventions and/or if co-occurring issues emerge such as social withdrawal, struggles at school or depression," says Dhuffar-Pottiwai.

"A multidisciplinary approach including dietitians, psychologists, and family therapy is often the most effective." – dpa

SCIENTISTS are trying a revolutionary new approach to treat rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, lupus and other devastating autoimmune diseases – by reprogramming patients' out-of-whack immune systems.

When your body's immune cells attack you instead of protecting you, today's treatments tamp down the friendly fire, but they don't fix what's causing it.

Patients face a lifetime of pricey pills, shots or infusions with some serious side effects – and all too often, the drugs aren't enough to keep their disease in check.

"We're entering a new era," said Johns Hopkins University rheumatologist Asst Prof Dr Maximilian Konig, who's studying some of the possible new treatments in the United States.

They offer "the chance to control disease in a way we've never seen before".

How? Researchers are altering dysfunctional immune systems, not just suppressing them, in a variety of ways that aim to be more potent and more precise than current therapies.

They're highly experimental, and because of potential side effects, largely restricted so far to patients who've exhausted today's treatments.

But people entering early-stage studies are grasping for hope.

Starting with lupus

"What the heck is wrong with my body?" Milyady Gonzalez, 35, of New York, US, remembers crying, frustrated that nothing was helping her daily lupus pain.

Diagnosed at 24, her disease was worsening, attacking her lungs and kidneys.

Gonzalez was having trouble breathing, needed help to stand and walk, and couldn't pick up her three-year-old son, when last July, her doctor at NYU Langone Health suggested the hospital's study using a treatment designed from cancer.

She had never heard of CAR-T (chimeric antigen receptor T cell) therapy, but decided: "I'm going to trust you."

Over several months, she slowly regained energy and strength.

"I can actually run, I can chase my kid," said Gonzalez, who is now pain- and pill-free.

"I had forgotten what it was to be me."

CAR-T was developed to wipe out hard-to-treat blood cancers.

But the cells that go bad in leukaemias and lymphomas – immune cells called B cells – go away in a different way in many autoimmune diseases.

Some American studies in mice suggested CAR-T therapy might help those diseases.

Then in Germany, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg immunologist Prof Dr Georg Schett tried it with a severely ill young woman who had failed other lupus treatments.

After one infusion, she's been in remission – with no other medicine – since March 2021.

Using T cells

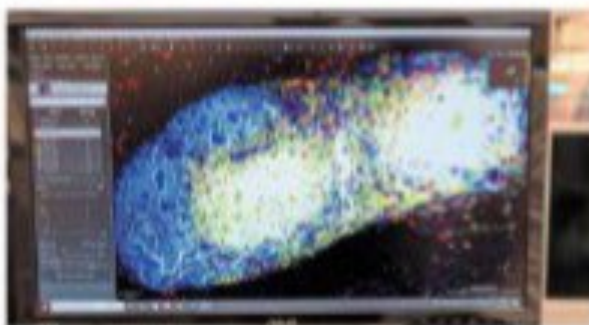
Last month, Prof Schett told a meeting of the American College of Rheumatology how his team gradually treated a few dozen more patients, with additional

Alternative treatments for autoimmune diseases

Current drugs for these chronic diseases don't work well and need to be taken for life; scientists are now trying a different approach.



Cell and gene therapy are being explored as potential treatments for a number of autoimmune diseases. – Photos: AP



In this image of a pancreatic lymph node from a mouse in Prof Green's lab, red marks the bad T cells that destroy insulin production, while yellow indicates the peacekeeper regulatory T cells that counter autoimmune responses.

diseases such as myositis and scleroderma, and few relapses so far.

Those early results were "shocking", Dr Konig recalled.

They led to an explosion of clinical trials testing CAR-T therapy in the US and abroad for a growing list of autoimmune diseases.

How it works: Immune soldiers called T cells are filtered out of a patient's blood and sent to a lab, where they're reprogrammed to destroy their B cell relatives.

After some chemotherapy to wipe out additional immune cells, millions of copies of those "living drugs" are infused back into the patient.

While autoimmune drugs can target certain B cells, experts say they can't get rid of those hidden deep in the body.

CAR-T therapy targets both the problem B cells and healthy ones that might eventually run amok.

Prof Schett theorises that the deep depletion rebalances the immune system so that when new B cells eventually form, they're healthy.

CAR-T is grueling, time-consuming and costly, in part

because it is customised.

A CAR-T cancer treatment can cost US\$500,000 (\$362,000).

Now, some companies are testing off-the-shelf versions, made in advance using cells from healthy donors.

Other methods

Another approach uses "peacekeeper" cells at the centre of this year's Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine.

Regulatory T cells are a rare subset of T cells that tamp down inflammation and help hold back other cells that mistakenly attack healthy tissue.

Some biotech companies are engineering cells from patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other diseases, not to attack like CAR-T does, but instead, to calm autoimmune reactions.

Scientists are also reprogramming another cancer treatment, drugs called T cell engagers, that don't require custom engineering.

These lab-made antibodies act like a matchmaker. They redirect the body's existing T cells to target antibody-producing B cells, said physician-scientist Prof Dr Ricardo Grieshaber-Bayer, who

works with Prof Schett and also studies possible alternatives to CAR-T.

Last month, Prof Grieshaber-Bayer reported giving a course of one such drug, vektigamab, to 10 patients with a variety of diseases including Sjögren's, myositis and systemic sclerosis.

All but one improved significantly and six went into drug-free remission.

Rather than wiping out swaths of the immune system, Dr Konig aims to get more precise, targeting "only that very small population of rogue cells that really causes the damage".

B cells have identifiers, like biological barcodes, showing they can produce faulty antibodies, he said.

Researchers in his lab are trying to engineer T cell engagers that would only mark "bad" B cells for destruction, leaving healthy ones in place to fight infection.

Targeting type 1 diabetes

Nearby in another Hopkins lab, biomedical engineer Prof Jordan Green is crafting a way for the immune system to reprogram itself with the help of instructions delivered by messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA), the genetic code used in certain Covid-19 vaccines.

In his lab, a computer screen shows with brightly coloured dots that resemble a galaxy.

It's a biological map that shows insulin-producing cells in the pancreas of a mouse.

Red marks rogue T cells that destroy insulin production. Yellow indicates those peacekeeper regulatory T cells – and they're outnumbered.

Prof Green's team aims to use mRNA to instruct certain immune "generals" to curb the bad T cells and send in more peacekeepers.

They package the mRNA in

biodegradable nanoparticles that can be injected like a drug.

When the right immune cells get the messages, the hope is they'll "divide, divide, divide" and make a whole army of healthy cells that then help treat the disease", Prof Green said.

The researchers will know it's working if that galaxy-like map shows less red and more yellow.

Studies in people are still a few years away.

A drug for type 1 diabetes "is forging the path", said University of Colorado Anschutz rheumatologist Prof Dr Kevin Deane.

Type 1 diabetes develops gradually, and blood tests can spot people who are brewing it.

A course of the drug teplizumab is approved to delay the first symptoms, modulating rogue T cells and protecting insulin production.

Exploring rheumatoid arthritis

Prof Deane studies rheumatoid arthritis and hopes to find a similar way to block the joint-destroying disease.

About 30% of people with a certain self-reactive antibody in their blood will eventually develop the condition.

A new study tracked some of those people for seven years, mapping immune changes leading to the disease long before joints become swollen or painful.

Those changes are potential drug targets, Prof Deane said.

While researchers hunt possible compounds to test, he's leading another study called StopRA: National to find and learn from more at-risk people.

Hoping for a cure

On all these fronts, there's a tremendous amount of research left to do – and no guarantees.

There are questions about CAR-T's safety and how long its effects last, but it is furthest along in testing.

Allie Rubin, 60, of Boca Raton, Florida, US, spent three decades battling lupus, including scary hospitalisations when it attacked her spinal cord.

But she qualified for CAR-T when she also developed lymphoma – and while a serious side effect delayed her recovery, next month will mark two years without a sign of either cancer or lupus.

"I just remember I woke up one day and thought, 'Oh my god, I don't feel sick anymore,'" she said.

That kind of result has researchers optimistic.

"We've never been closer to getting to – and we don't like to say it – a potential cure," said Dr Konig.

"I think the next 10 years will dramatically change our field forever." – AP



Villager Asae Kayu getting his blood pressure checked by a staff member of Baling District Health Office.

KEDAH



Kedah MMA committee members with the Lubok Lenggong villagers during the programme.

Medical group takes specialist care to remote Orang Asli village

IN AN effort narrow healthcare gaps in rural communities, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) Kedah Branch took specialist-level medical care directly into the Orang Asli village of Lubok Lenggong through its *Sihat Bersama Pakar* outreach programme.

The initiative saw a multidisciplinary team of doctors delivering hospital-grade services to 184 residents from 82 Kensi families

in Perkampungan Orang Asli.

The village, home to 325 people, is among the most remote and underserved in Kedah.

The outreach, one of the most comprehensive of its kind, was led by senior consultant Dr Thiyagar Nadarajaw and supported by specialists in paediatrics, family medicine, obstetrics and gynaecology, ENT, dermatology and dental care.

All participating doctors were

MMA members from both government and the private sectors.

For many villagers, this marked their first-ever encounter with specialist care.

The team conducted assessments within the community, offering services typically provided only in a clinical environment.

These included blood pressure and glucose checks, visual acuity

tests, eye screening, paediatric evaluations and women's health reviews.

For generations, residents of Lubok Lenggong have faced challenges such as distance, transportation limitations, financial constraints and language differences that have made it difficult to access specialist healthcare.

Kedah MMA chairman Dr Sriharan Rao said the initiative

was designed to remove these obstacles by bringing care to the heart of the village.

"The journey to Lubok Lenggong was not easy, but our purpose was clear: to stand beside the Orang Asli, to heal, to protect and to honour them," he said.

"Specialist care and food baskets were only the beginning. What we truly delivered was humanity."

Must watch



Recognising the Unsung, Inspiring the Next | Star Golden Hearts Award 2025

Marking its 11th anniversary on Nov 20, the Star Golden Hearts Award (SGHA) continued this tradition by honouring ten outstanding unsung heroes as its 2025 recipients.



Retro Recipe: Garibaldi biscuits

Once nicknamed "squashed fly biscuits", Garibaldis carry the unmistakable flavour of childhood memories.



Must read



Rising waters, rising risks

Experts warn of mounting health threats caused by floods

By RAGANANTHINI VETHASALAM
and FAZLEENA AZIZ
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

PETALING JAYA: With the country being inundated with extreme rain and severe flooding, there is a heightened risk of infectious diseases and complications for those with long-term illnesses.

Leptospirosis spreads through water contaminated with animal urine and can lead to fever, chills, vomiting, diarrhoea and muscle aches.

Cholera, caused by contaminated food or water, may result in severe dehydration within hours if untreated.

Flooded areas also create stagnant pools that accelerate the breeding of aedes mosquitoes, increasing the risk of dengue while long exposure to dirty floodwater can also cause fungal infections and skin inflammation.

Alpro Pharmacy chief pharmacist and director of engagement Lim En Ni said when the water level rose, risks of leptospirosis, cholera, dengue and various skin infections increased significantly due to contaminated water, reduced sanitation and rapid breeding of mosquitoes.

"Patients with chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart conditions are at much higher risk if their treatment is disrupted. It is vital that they remain on their medications."

"People should stay alert for symptoms such as fever, diarrhoea, vomiting, headaches, rash-

"Flooding also creates unsanitary conditions and can lead to respiratory issues from dust, fungi, mould, while contact with floodwater can cause coughing, asthma, lung allergies, skin infections and illnesses."

Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh

es or sudden weakness.

"Early action can prevent serious complications. During a disaster, recognising symptoms quickly is extremely important," said the pharmacist.

Public health expert Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh said water-borne diseases can transmit through contaminated flood waters leading to a host of diseases such as gastrointestinal illnesses like cholera, typhoid, dysentery and diarrhoea.

She said vectors such as mosquitoes and rats too can breed diseases.

"These can breed in stagnant water, debris and spread diseases like dengue, leptospirosis and malaria."

"Flooding also creates unsanitary conditions and can lead to respiratory issues from dust, fungi, mould, while contact with floodwater can cause coughing, asthma, lung allergies, skin infections and illnesses," she said.

Dr Sharifa Ezat said the public

should also beware of hazards such as risk of drowning, being struck by electricity or sharp and heavy objects.

"There is risk of hypothermia especially if one is in the water for prolonged periods mainly involving children and elderly folk. This can lead to deaths," she cautioned.

People may also lack clean water due to contamination with animal faeces or human sewage which can predispose them to gastroenteritis, diarrhoea, vomiting and fever," she added.

Retired Health Ministry director Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said when floodwater mixes with sewage, garbage, and chemicals, it becomes a toxic soup filled with harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites.

"Simply walking through it, or using contaminated water to clean or cook, can make you sick," he said.

He advised the public to consume boiled water and refrain

from using tap water until it is confirmed as safe.

He said good hygiene which includes washing hands regularly, disinfecting the house and protecting feet with waterproof footwear must also be observed.

"If you or a family member develops a fever, severe stomach cramps, diarrhoea or vomiting, do not wait. Go to a clinic or hospital right away," he said.

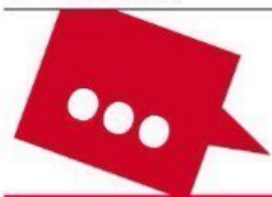
In response to the situation, Alpro Pharmacy and Alpro ePharmacy are also extending support to affected communities by activating the Life-Saving Medication Care Programme.

This initiative, subsidised by the Alpro Foundation, provides a one-time supply of up to seven days of chronic medication at no cost to verified flood victims.

Flood victims who require chronic medication may visit any of Alpro Pharmacy's 300 outlets nationwide. A police report regarding the flood incident is required for verification.

For those who have misplaced or lost their prescriptions, Alpro ePharmacy will provide complimentary online consultation and e-prescription services to facilitate the provision of their medication supply.

For more information on the Life-Saving Medication Care Programme or to locate the nearest Alpro Pharmacy, contact Alpro customer care at 013-398 2923 or speak with a professional pharmacist via the Alpro ePharmacy WhatsApp hotline at 019-702 1923.



YOUR OPINION

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A pseudonym may be included.

A birthday, a note, and a reminder

AT a time when the voices pointing out the cracks in our health-care system are overwhelmingly loud, I want to pause, step back, and look at a different picture – one that rarely makes the headlines.

◀ Last week in our ward, a little girl celebrated her 12th birthday. Not at home, not surrounded by classmates or cousins but in a hospital bed, the place she has learned to call her second home.

She has been with us for a long time, fighting her battles with courage only children can muster. And without being asked, without any fanfare, the nurses and doctors gathered around her with a small celebration: balloons, a simple birthday song, and a lot of warmth. There were no specific orders from the higher authority. No publicity. It wasn't part of any KPI. It was simply care, the kind that comes from the heart.

Just moments before the surprise we had planned she handed us a handwritten note. A small



A nation's pride: Hospital Kuala Lumpur nurses in personal protective equipment caring for a Covid-19 patient in a quarantine ward in January. — Filepic/The Star

piece of paper filled with large, shaky letters, a child's sincerity pouring through every stroke: "Thank you doctors and nurses for taking care of me for the past week. Pray for me to get well soon!"

Just two lines.

But enough to stop us in our tracks. Because in those lines lies

the truth many forget: Behind every bed, beyond every chart, there are human beings, both the ones being cared for and the ones doing the caring. And because in Malaysia, we often don't realise how privileged we are.

In a world where healthcare can bankrupt families, Malaysian government hospitals offer:

> Access to specialists in every major field.

> Paediatric care, surgeries, and ICU support at a fraction of global costs.

> Medications and treatments that are not affordable in many countries.

> Teams of nurses, medical officers, specialists, physiotherapists, dietitians, pharmacists and many more who show up, day and night, not because the system is perfect but because they believe children like that little girl deserve a fighting chance.

> Humanity that cannot be priced.

Yes, there are imperfections, like with any system in the world. Yes, we face limitations, frustrations, manpower shortages, resource constraints.

But amid all of that....

Here was a birthday celebration for a child who deserved to feel seen. Here was a handwritten note from a little girl reminding us that care is still alive and present.

Maybe instead of only asking what is broken we should also ask: What is still beautiful? What is still working? What is still worth protecting?

Every day, in every government hospital across Malaysia, thousands of quiet acts of kindness unfold, unseen, undocumented, uncelebrated.

And sometimes, all it takes is a small note from a 12-year-old girl to remind us why we chose this profession, and why our public healthcare system – despite its flaws – remains one of our nation's greatest strengths.

That little girl reminded us of that. Perhaps she can remind the whole country too.

**DR NAVEEN NAIR
GANGADARAN
Paediatrician
Seremban**

The writer is a committee member of the Malaysian Paediatric Association and the Perinatal Society Malaysia.