

This Malaysian doctor is creating cancer awareness, one community at a time

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BY MARK RYAN RAJ



Dr Christina Ng speaks during the launch of the Lung Cancer Awareness Charity Run 2018 in Kepong. — Picture via Facebook/ Empowered Malaysia

PETALING JAYA, June 4 — Say “cancer” and it is likely that thoughts of patients suffering emerge.

This is despite the technological advancements and developments in the medical industry that are now available to manage and treat most cancers, especially colorectal cancer.

According to Dr Christina Ng Van Tze, a medical oncologist, colorectal cancer is very preventable.

Colorectal cancer is the number one cancer amongst men globally, and second amongst women, mainly because it is not picked up early.

“As a cancer, colorectal cancer is very curable if picked up early, but even in advanced stages, like stage IV, it is very treatable,” said Dr Ng in an interview with *Malay Mail*.

Prevention and awareness

The founder and president of Empowered, the Cancer Advocacy Society of Malaysia formed the non-profit organisation in 2009, to help spread awareness about colorectal cancer to underprivileged communities as well as get access to proper cancer screenings and treatments.

Dr Ng has years of medical training in cancer genetics, personalised cancer care and psycho-oncology in Australia.

Currently based at the Onco Life Care Centre, she was previously attached to hospitals like Universiti Malaya Medical Centre, Pantai Hospital KL and Sunway Medical Centre.

“When I set up Empowered many years ago, I thought that healthcare was an important necessity that all Malaysians are entitled to,” added Dr Ng.

She said that she was very passionate about her cancer work and that even if it was only on a small scale, she could still offer her expertise to people who needed it the most.

Empowered has influenced over 100,000 people through their cancer workshops and screenings in the Klang Valley, as they target under-resourced communities and clinics that could do with a helping hand.

She said that in under-resourced communities, the main priority of the people was not health care, as they prioritise their funds to things like getting food on the table and sending their kids to school.

“In these types of communities where awareness levels are low, we enlist hundreds of volunteers to knock on doors not only to spread awareness about colorectal cancer, but to also invite them to the main workshops and screenings that we have,” said Dr Ng.

She added that these workshops were not just projects for the organisation, but rather a service that they provide to the communities.

But it does not end there.

During the screenings, if a person is diagnosed with colorectal cancer, the volunteers from Empowered take it a step further by walking the patients through the management of treatments, surgery, chemotherapy, right to the end of their battle with the disease.

“We want to make them feel like they are not alone, like there is someone here with them,” said Dr Ng.

She said that because of how prevalent the disease is, there has been a lot of research and development in screening tools and mechanisms to help detect the disease.

The diagnostics of colorectal cancer have been revolutionised at molecular, genetic and DNA levels, with well-established screening tools like the Faecal Immunochemical Test which helps to pick up symptoms of the disease, sometimes even before they have become cancer.

For more information on Empowered surf over to officeadmin@empowered.org.my or call +603 7726 8806.