

1 in 5 suffers from cancer

HEALTH CONCERN:

Disease is the fourth highest cause of death in public hospitals

THARANYA ARUMUGAM

KUALA LUMPUR
tharanya@nst.com.my

ONE in five Malaysians suffers from cancer, with the disease the fourth highest cause of death in government hospitals.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya said a survey showed that 19,000 of 100,000 respondents suffered from cancer, with women being more at risk than men, with a ratio of 1.2:1.

He said of the 19,000 Malaysians suffering from cancer, 10,240 were women.

"Of the 100,000 people, 4,058 Malay men and 4,753 Malay women were diagnosed with cancer, while 4,078 Chinese men and 4,422 Chinese women were diagnosed with the disease.

"This is followed by 629 Indian men and 1,065 Indian women," he said after launching the 2016 Colorectal Cancer Awareness, Screening and Treatment Project here yesterday.

Dr Hilmi said the top five types of cancer affecting men and women in Malaysia were breast cancer (14.5 per cent of all cancer cases in the country); colorectal cancer (12.1 per cent); lung cancer (11.8 per cent); cervical cancer (5.7 per cent); and nasopharyngeal cancer (5.4 per cent).

"Overall, looking at the general trend, Chinese are more at risk of getting cancer compared with Malays or Indians.

"The ministry is studying the cause and we have yet to learn why the number of cases (involving different types of the disease, like



Deputy Health Minister **Datuk Seri Dr Hilmi Yahaya** (right) meeting **cancer survivors** during the 2016 Colorectal Cancer Awareness, Screening and Treatment Project in **Cheras, Kuala Lumpur**, yesterday. Pic by Rosela Ismail

breast, colorectal and throat cancers) are high among Chinese.

"We can't pinpoint the exact cause. We advise people to conduct early and regular checkups, perhaps bi-annually, to detect the disease at an early stage for more effective treatment."

He said those with a family history of cancer should be cautious and seek medical attention if they detected any sign and symptom of the disease.

The ministry's 2014 statistics, he said, showed that cancer was the fourth highest cause of death in public hospitals (13.02 per cent).

He said it was estimated that one in four Malaysians would develop cancer by age 75.

According to the National Cancer Society of Malaysia website, breast cancer was the most common form of cancer affecting women, where one in 19 women would be diagnosed with breast cancer by the age of 85.

"About 4,000 women are diagnosed each year, mostly aged between 35 and 60, with 40 per cent affected below the age of 50. Though it is rare, men can also develop breast cancer."

Colorectal cancer was the second most common form of cancer, affecting about 2,900 Malaysians each year, mostly above the age of 50, but it can occur to anyone. It is the second most common cancer in Malaysian men.