

Sabah hospital offers latest technology to detect early heart problems

By Paul Mu - April 26, 2022 @ 8:03pm



Heart specialist Dr Edward Sia encourages the people over 40 to do annual heart screening to prevent sudden cardiac arrest. - NSTP/PAUL MU.

KOTA KINABALU: It is possible to prevent sudden cardiac arrest, said consultant cardiologist and physician Dr Edward Sia Hock Nung.

Unlike the conventional echocardiogram, he said the latest ultrasound machine with a special function could detect even subtle changes in heart function.

"That (latest) echocardiography can pick up abnormalities in the heart, with more details to see how the muscles are functioning.

"It can also do myocardial strain imaging to see the 'lengthening and shortening' of the heart muscles," he said, adding that people especially aged 40 and above should go for an annual medical checkup.

Dr Sia added that cardiac arrest, which is when the heart suddenly stops pumping blood around the body, could happen to anyone, including those with active lifestyles.

The heart specialist said sudden death related to cardiac arrest is usually associated with the thickening of the heart walls giving no symptoms.

Dr Sia, who is attached to KPJ Sabah Specialist Hospital, said he purchased the machine two years ago and learned about it to improve cardiac medical care by diagnosing the early stage of heart problems.

He said the technology also could help to plan the right time to do heart valve operations.

However, he said few hospitals in Malaysia are using the machine because it is costly and time-consuming to learn how to operate.

As the specialised machine is still new and the only one in Sabah, Dr Sia said the fee charged for the technology is still the same as the conventional echocardiogram.

He added it is still simpler and cheaper to use the machine instead of scanning the heart using cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

It is learned that another private hospital would also buy the machine in June.