

## **Programme to help diabetics lead healthier lifestyle**

By Luqman Hakim - March 14, 2023 @ 5:44pm

KUALA LUMPUR: Fifty government health clinics have been identified to be part of the Diabetes Lifestyle Programme (DLP) pilot, involving 60 Family Medicine specialists.

DLP Expert Panel chairperson Datuk Dr Zanariah Hussein said the programme aimed to guide diabetic patients on managing their condition through lifestyle changes.

She said DLP has trained more than 3,000 healthcare professionals from different specialities of a diabetes care team, such as medical doctors, diabetes nurse educators, dietitians and pharmacists.

"About 1,000 healthcare professionals have become full-fledged DLP advocates, 74 per cent of whom are in government settings.

"DLP's first objective is to train and develop healthcare professionals into diabetes lifestyle advocates.

"Our second objective is to empower patients with the knowledge, skills, attitude and self-awareness to take charge of their lifestyle. We developed the DLP web-based application for this purpose.

"The third objective is to facilitate the implementation of the programme in all healthcare settings, particularly at the primary care level," she said in a speech during the launch of the event today.

The event was formalised with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between medical and partner health societies.

Present were Health Ministry Medical Development Division director Dr Mohd Azman Yacob, DLP expert panel co-chair and former Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai, and DLP expert panel co-chair Dr Sri Wahyu Taher.

Dr Zanariah, who is a senior endocrinologist, said the programme was needed to fill the missing link in how healthcare professionals and patients have traditionally managed diabetes.

She added that most healthcare professionals and patients have relied heavily on medication to control blood sugar levels.

Medications were vital but would be ineffective if patients continue to lead an unhealthy lifestyle, she said.

"Sadly, many healthcare professionals and patients underestimate the importance of lifestyle intervention in controlling diabetes.

"This is why we establish the DLP to enable healthcare professionals and people with diabetes to acquire basic skills in dietary management, physical activity, self-monitoring of blood sugar, and motivation to stay on course, to make a real difference in patient-related outcomes."

The programme encourages people with diabetes to perform regular self-monitoring of blood sugar to better understand their blood sugar patterns at different times of the day.

The information will enable them to adjust their food intake and other lifestyle practices to keep their blood sugar levels on target.

Dr Zanariah said losing at least five per cent of excess body weight had been shown to improve one's blood sugar, cholesterol and blood pressure.

"Most people would benefit from professional guidance. As such, the DLP provides free virtual dietitian consultations so that people with diabetes can obtain more specific advice, including meal replacement using diabetes-specific formula."

The DLP is only available through participating healthcare professionals.