

Taking steps to up cancer fight

Specialist says healthy lifestyle, health screening and knowing your own body vital



Sunway Medical Centre Cancer, Radiosurgery and Nuclear Medicine Department manager and chief medical physicist Dr Heng Siew Ping (left) and Dr Aqilah with the Radixact-X9 Tomotherapy.

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CANCER is the fourth most common cause of death in Malaysia, with approximately 37,000 cases reported every year.

It is estimated that this number will rise to more than 55,000 newly-diagnosed cases by 2030.

The Health Ministry's Malaysian Study on Cancer Survival reveals that cancer is responsible for 12.6% of all deaths in government hospitals and 26.7% in private hospitals.

Most cases show poor survival rates as cancer patients presented late for treatment, specifically at Stage 3 and Stage 4.

Sunway Medical Centre clinical

oncologist Dr Aqilah Othman said there were many types of cancer which cause different symptoms.

"Possible symptoms include a lump, abnormal bleeding, excessive weight loss and changes in bowel movements," she said.

Dr Aqilah, who specialises in breast and colorectal cancers, said cancer was typically treated with radiation, surgery, chemotherapy and other targeted therapies.

She believes the mortality rate among cancer patients in Malaysia is relatively high due to poor public awareness on the importance of health screening.

"Screening greatly increases the chances of treating cancer successfully.

"It is recommended that women undergo breast cancer screening to detect abnormalities in their breasts.

"In general, it is important to know your body and immediately seek medical attention if you feel something is not right," she added.

Dr Aqilah said that to prevent cancer, leading a healthy lifestyle was important.

"My advice is to stop smoking, maintain a healthy weight, control alcohol intake and eat plenty of vegetables, fruits and whole grains," she said in an interview.

Sunway Medical Centre has introduced a new facility called Radixact-X9 Tomotherapy, which uses refined X-ray beamline.