



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP'S Heart-To-Heart Comments On Smoking

In conjunction with the World Health Organization (WHO) declaration that the theme for this year's World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) on 31 May as "Tobacco and heart disease", the Consumer's Association of Penang (CAP) reiterate its innumerable calls for people to quit smoking. For non-smokers, do not allow yourselves to be enticed into the addictive habit. It certainly does not pay.

Smoking is a prime cause of various medical conditions such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes globally. These are just tip of the iceberg as smoking-related diseases account for about 20,000 deaths in Malaysia annually.

Let us imagine its equivalent to 444 tour buses packed with 45 passengers crashing without any survivors in a year. It is also similar to having one such bus crashing daily for four days and two bus crashes on every fifth day; this repeats for a full year. That is the number of Malaysians dying from smoking every year.

If there is a news report of a bus accident, the news media will be drowned with letters and comments from the public but the deaths of 20,000 Malaysians every year have merely been a statistic. We have miserably failed to eradicate preventable deaths.

In a "Malaysia Boleh" style, coronary heart disease (CHD) has been recorded as a leading killer since 2007 in public hospitals. Statistics are worrying because cardiovascular disease (notably CHD and stroke) accounts for 24.7 percent of deaths in public and private hospitals in 2013. More than a quarter (38 percent) of patients suffering from Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS) were smokers.

Smoking spans beyond splurging hard-earned money on a non-productive habit that is highly addictive; it involves the inhalation of more than 4,000 chemicals into the lungs which are then absorbed into the body, causing a large number of serious health concerns. Casual exposure to second hand smoke, a common air pollutant, can also cause smoking-related diseases including CHD to a non-smoker.

It was found that smokers are almost twice likely to suffer a heart attack as compared to non-smokers. One reason is that the carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke starves the blood of oxygen and this means that the heart has to pump much harder to supply the body with the oxygen it requires.

Moreover, smoking damages the lining of the arteries, resulting in a build-up of fatty material (atheroma) thereby narrowing the artery which can cause angina, a heart attack or a stroke.

Nicotine, a chemical that is found naturally in tobacco, is as addictive as heroin or cocaine and is attributed to stimulating the body to produce adrenaline, causing faster heart rate. Blood pressure is raised when the heart beats faster, thereby triggering the heart to work harder.

Quitting is the only way to dramatically reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and a variety of cancers. Smokers are almost twice as likely to have a heart attack compared with people who have never smoked.

We hope that the new Ministers of Finance and Health would look into introducing higher tobacco tax rates, introduce plain packaging, and withdraw duty-free concession on all tobacco products.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
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