



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

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CAP Welcomes Government Move On Hepatitis C Medicine, Calls For It To Be Made Available Within A Few Days Or Weeks

The Consumers Association of Penang congratulates the Government for issuing a license relating to the “rights of government” to obtain generic versions of the Hepatitis C medicine sofosbuvir, as announced by the Minister of Health, Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam in his press statement on 20 September.

This move has raised hopes of the 500,000 Hepatitis C patients in Malaysia and their families that at long last there can be an effective cure made available at affordable cost.

We call on the government to make the medicine available to patients within days or at most a few weeks.

The government measure should result in massive savings of 95-99 per cent. The present price of a full course of treatment for 12 weeks is about RM300,000.

The Minister said at his press conference on 20 September that the last price negotiated with the company that holds the patent for sofosbuvir was RM50,000. CAP believes that with the “government use” license that has been issued, the use of generics can decrease the price to a range of RM500 to RM1,000 per patient per course of treatment.

In other words, the government and the patients can save cost up to 95-99 per cent by obtaining generic versions of the medicine, through the issuing of the government use license.

Malaysia is the first country in the world to issue a government-use license or a compulsory license for sofosbuvir or any medicines in the category known as direct acting anti-virals (DAA) which are effective for treating Hepatitis C. The Malaysian action could inspire other countries to do likewise.

Issuing such a license is fully compatible with the rules of the World Trade Organisation and the Malaysian Patent Act.

We congratulate the Minister of Health and his colleagues in the Health Ministry and other Ministries for this bold move that will benefit many thousands of patients.

We call on the government to take the necessary follow up action to procure the drug sofosbuvir and make it available within a few days or weeks, as so many thousands of lives are at stake.

The Health Ministry should also explore other Hepatitis C drugs that are required for use in combination with sofosbuvir, and take measures to remove restrictions to their sale at affordable prices in Malaysia.

The Health Ministry should also complete its clinical trials undertaken in cooperation with Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), and continue its collaboration thereafter with the aim of making an appropriate combination drug available in Malaysia at the initial targeted price of RM1,000 per treatment per patient.

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