



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement/ Letter to the Editor

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Ensure Covid-19 vaccination hotline is speedy and effective

On 23 May 2021 registration for the second round of opt-in AstraZeneca vaccination began for those aged 60 and above residing in the states of Penang, Johor, Selangor, Sarawak, and the W.P. Kuala Lumpur. This round of volunteer AstraZeneca vaccination seems to have come in a timely manner (even though only strictly for those aged 60 and above, at the moment) as 23 May also marked the highest record of new Covid-19 cases recorded so far – 6976 cases. We are also seeing between 40 to 50 new cases of deaths caused by Covid-19 almost every day since the third wave began in Malaysia. Prioritising our elderly population who may be vulnerable due to underlying health conditions is the right move. However, before they can be vaccinated, they need to first register to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine; and this is where the difficulty is for some people.

There are those who are 60 years and above who have already had themselves registered to be vaccinated as early as February 2021 but still have not received a date to get the vaccine. As such they are excited for this round of AstraZeneca vaccination but are not IT savvy and need someone else to do the registration for them (keep in mind this is a separate registration!). The government has been encouraging the younger generation to quickly register their elder family members who are eligible to receive it as way to overcome the gap in IT savviness.

The government needs to keep in mind that using the “younger” generation to bridge the IT savviness gap is not viable in every situation. Some people just do not have younger family members to help them or are living completely alone.

For these elderlies, the only other option is for them to call the Special Committee on Covid-19 Vaccine Supply's (JKJAV) hotline to find out what other options they have. While this may seem easy as mostly everybody knows how to use a phone, the process could get complicated and tiresome.

Upon calling the JKJAV hotline, the caller will encounter a machine or an auto attendant and once all the necessary options have been selected, they will be put on a call waiting list to speak to an officer. One person shared his experience of waiting nearly half an hour before being able to speak to an officer – he was number 33 in line when he started waiting.

The Consumers' Association of Penang asks that the authorities ensure that the call answering system (machine/auto attendant) works speedily and effectively as it is supposed to be a hotline. There needs to be an “ease of use” to the system so that even the elderly that live *sebatang kara* have a way to handle matters related to their Covid-19 vaccination on their own.

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