

Take action against pneumococcal pneumonia

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MANY people would be surprised to learn that pneumonia has been the second leading cause of death in Malaysia annually over the last decade.

According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM), in 2019, it contributed to approximately 12.2 percent of deaths in the country.

Due to the severity of pneumonia, Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) recently donated pneumococcal vaccines in support of several hospitals and NGOs seeking to help protect their patients from *Streptococcus pneumoniae* or *S. pneumoniae*.

Hospital Universiti Teknologi MARA (HUiTM) consultant clinical microbiologist, Professor Dr Ariza Adnan, says *S. pneumoniae* is a bacterium that can cause the air sacs of the lungs to fill up with fluid and pus.

Dr Ariza, who is also a member of the Immunise4Life technical committee, explains that a *S. pneumoniae* infection can lead to pneumococcal pneumonia, one of the most common causes of community-acquired pneumonia (CAP).

"We must not underestimate pneumococcal CAP because it accounts for up to 27 per cent of all pneumonia cases worldwide".

Pneumococcal pneumonia can be effectively prevented by practising good personal hygiene, leading a healthy lifestyle, not smoking, avoiding second-hand smoke as well as getting vaccinated.

Ironically, a recent survey by the Malaysian Thoracic Society (MTS) found that more than half (62 per cent) of respondents were not even aware that vaccination can help protect them from the disease.

Dr Ariza says advancing age is one of the primary risk factors for pneumococcal pneumonia. Adults 65 years or older are over 10 times more likely to be hospitalised for the disease than adults aged 18 to 49. Having comorbidities also increases the risk.

<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/heal/2021/11/743107/take-action-against-pneumococcal-pneumonia>