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English News

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## EARLY EDUCATION CAN HELP PREVENT AND MANAGE POISONING CASES

GEORGE TOWN, PENANG, March 2015 - Poisoning incidents can be prevented or reduced if members of the public are better informed of its hazards and consequences.

The public should also be made aware of the risk when handling poisonous substances and should be given early education on how to manage poisoning cases.

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs) Professor Dato' Dr. Ahmad Shukri Mustapa Kamal said, since pharmacists are usually the front-line people dealing with consumers when dispensing or providing general prescription advice, their role is significant in providing the public with the right guidance.

"Pharmacists play a very important role in disseminating the relevant information on the proper handling of poisonous substances based on the labels found on the bottles of the substances or the instructions of usage on the leaflet so that the public will be extra careful and take the necessary precautions when using these substances," he said.

Ahmad Shukri was representing the USM Vice-Chancellor to officiate the opening of the 1st National Symposium on Poisoning 2016 at the St. Giles Wembley Hotel here recently.

He added that cases of poisoning often resulted in injuries and deaths, and is a major threat to public health.

"According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), medicine poisoning remains a major threat to public health at the global level as deaths and injuries due to poisoning were linked to taking medicine not according to the prescribed dosage or that the medicine was not kept under prescribed conditions or improper handling.

"However, not all poisoning cases happened unintentionally as some were intentional as found in suicide cases," he said.

Furthermore, Ahmad Shukri hoped that the symposium would provide opportunities for all participants including health professionals and paramedics especially pharmacists, to widen their knowledge on the diverse types of poisons in the environment, the effects of poisoning, prescribed treatments and poisoning prevention methods.

Also present were the President of Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society, Datuk Nancy Ho; Director of USM National Poison Centre Associate Professor Razak Lajis and the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (Penang Branch) Chairperson, Bharati Suresh Chand.

Razak Lajis said, he is proud that the USM National Poison Centre has been serving as the referral point in providing professional advice and consultation to hospitals and the public on managing poisoning incidents.

"Todate we have handled about 45,000 poisoning cases in the country, with an average of 4,000 to 5,000 cases per year.

"On average there are about 30 cases of poisoning from misuse of medicines reported daily, involving primarily children, followed by adults and teenagers," he added.

The two-day symposium held for the first time was organised by the Penang branch of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society with the cooperation of the USM National Poison Centre.

Over 180 participants mostly pharmacists and professionals gathered at the symposium to discuss on matters related to poisoning incidence and the prevention and proper management of poisoning.

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