

Dengue vaccine price soars

Some clinics offering jab for nearly triple the supplier's RM170 cost

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PETALING JAYA: The newly-launched dengue vaccine, Qdenga, is being offered at some clinics for over RM500, which is believed to be nearly three times higher than the supplier's price.

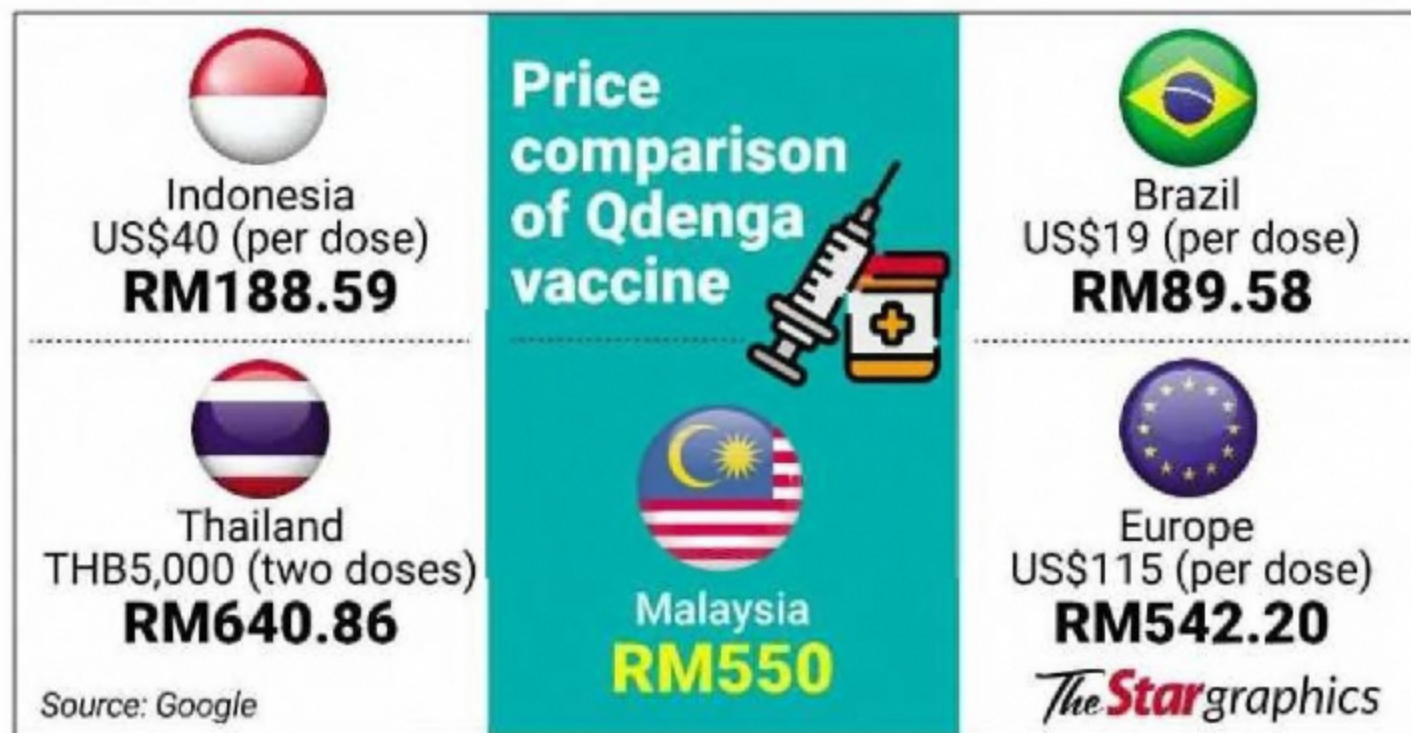
The Star learnt that the vaccine is sourced at about RM170 per box from the supplier. It contains two doses.

Checks on a telemedicine site showed that the two doses were being offered for RM550.

At this time, the Qdenga vaccine, manufactured by the pharmaceutical company Takeda, is only available at private healthcare facilities.

Federation of Private Medical Practitioners Associations Malaysia president Dr Shanmuganathan TV Ganeson said the vaccine is available at clinics via a few distributors.

"Demand for the vaccine is not



there yet. The vaccine only reduces the severity of the disease and does not prevent transmission.

"I do expect some vaccine hesitancy with this one," he said.

Health experts said Qdenga must be made accessible to the masses.

Prof Dr Zamberi Sekawi, a consultant clinical microbiologist with Universiti Putra Malaysia said the vaccine should be made

available at a more affordable price as it has proven to be effective.

"The vaccine has been shown to reduce hospitalisation and severe dengue," he said.

Former health ministry official and public health expert Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said cost remains a challenge.

"Cost is one of the challenges for the vaccination programme.

The current cost of the vaccine is unaffordable to the government and general public," he said.

Dr Zainal added that the government should work with vaccine manufacturers and private healthcare providers to find an appropriate mechanism to administer Qdenga to selected groups of people, such as children living in high-risk areas.

"The vaccine can save lives and costs and (lighten the) health burden. So hopefully, manufacturers and private clinics should not only be thinking about big profit margins but also making it affordable to the government and public," he said.

Launched in the Malaysian market recently, Qdenga is administered in two doses over a three-month interval and can be injected into those aged four and above.

The vaccine, approved by the Drug Control Authority, is designed to protect against all four dengue virus serotypes.