

'Make flu shots available through Socso scheme'

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PETALING JAYA: Influenza vaccines should be made available to employees through the Social Security Organisation (Socso) to encourage the uptick in immunisation in the country.

SME Association Malaysia president Ding Hong Sing said Socso could assist employers in providing the annual flu vaccination for their employees.

"The employers from SMEs would like to raise awareness among their employees about flu vaccination after what we have faced following the Covid-19 pandemic.

"However, given that the employees typically bear the annual cost of vaccination, I think Socso could offer a more

cost-effective solution.

"This is so we can encourage more people to take the vaccine and alleviate the financial burden faced by SMEs in the past years," he said when contacted yesterday.

Ding said this when commenting on efforts to raise awareness about flu-related cases after the government decided to do away with the home surveillance order (HSO) for Covid-19 cases starting July 15.

Flu vaccinations are now widely available at private clinics and usually cost between RM70 and RM100 per dose.

This immunisation is recommended for all age groups, particularly those with comorbidities, and should be administered on an annual basis.

Agreeing to the suggestion is Malaysian Influenza Working Group (MIWG) chair-

man Professor Dr Zamberi Sekawi, who said the proposal should also target employees with existing health conditions.

"It is a good move, but to be more valuable, they should target and prioritise those with comorbidities such as heart disease, diabetes and hypertension," he said.

Dr Zamberi also warned that influenza can be fatal because it can cause a heart attack; thus, it is critical to focus flu vaccination on employees in the high-risk group.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist and biostatistician Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman also urged employers to devise plans to encourage staff to take the flu vaccinations.

"It is highly recommended that employers provide an avenue for their employees, especially those within the high-risk cate-

gory, to get the vaccines," she said.

Commenting on the removal of the HSO directive for Covid-19 cases by the Health Ministry, Malaysian Employers Federation president Datuk Dr Syed Hussain Syed Husman said employers should allow employees who are Covid-19 positive to work from home.

"The employee, however, must maintain communication with their immediate supervisor (while working from home)."

If the employer decides to let the employee with Covid-19 return to work, Syed Hussain recommends that he work separately from his coworkers.

"The wearing of the N95 mask should be a practice while maintaining a suitable physical distance with other personnel," he said.