



Dr Ahmad Bustamam Abdul holding mock packets of a natural compound for the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer.

# UPM dons find cure for cervical cancer

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**SERDANG:** A breakthrough by Universiti Putra Malaysia's team of researchers may see cancer patients beat the odds against cervical cancer.

UPM researchers led by BioMedical Sciences Department lecturer and research associate Dr Ahmad Bustamam Abdul, have discovered a natural compound, isolated from a local herbal plant named "lempoyang" which can prevent and treat cervical cancer.

Lempoyang is a flowering plant from the ginger family which is commonly found in Peninsular Malaysia.

The compound is the first reported and documented finding that substantiated the ability of a natural compound of local plant origin to eliminate cancer cells of the cervix.

It has safer anti-cancer properties as it specifically targets cancer cells and does not cause damage to normal cell tissues even at high dosages, unlike most synthetic anti-cancer drugs which are highly toxic.

"Our preliminary pre-clinical studies have shown that this natural compound is able to inhibit the progression of cervical intraepithelial neoplasia (CIN) stage III in animal disease model studies," Ahmad Bustamam said.

"The compound has similar efficacy to commercial anti-cancer

drugs used frequently to treat cervical cancer but delivering lesser toxicity in normal human cells.

"Our data also showed that laboratory rats could withstand high dosages of the compound without any damage to normal tissues."

Speaking at a press conference here yesterday, he said the compound, which can be commercialised in the form of feminine douches and suppositories, does not have any known side effects.

He said the commercialisation of the technology would definitely reduce the cost of importing therapeutic drugs and treating cervical cancer patients as the compound could be used as an adjuvant to current chemotherapy.

Also present yesterday was Research and Innovation deputy vice-chancellor Prof Ir Dr Mohd Saleh Jaafar.

Other members of the research team are Prof Dr Rashedee Abdullah, Prof Dr Mohd Aspollah Sukari, Assoc Prof Dr Siddiq Ibrahim Abdel Wahab, Prof Datuk Dr Tengku Azmi Tengku Ibrahim and Dr Murali Syam Mohan.

A patent has been filed in respect of the technology in the use of plant metabolite as an anti cancer alternative.

Cervical cancer is abnormal cell growth in the cervix which is primarily caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV).

Every year about 1,500 women in Malaysia are diagnosed with cervical cancer, with half of the sufferers succumbing to it.