

Plant raises anti-cancer cure hopes

LOCAL RESEARCH: 'Red Butterfly Wing' extracts also a cure for other diseases

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THERE may be hope yet for thousands of cancer patients in the country.

Ongoing efforts by researchers at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) have proven fruitful, as a preliminary study on a plant known as the Red Butterfly Wing, or scientifically known as *Christia vespertilionis*, has shown to possess anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory characteristics.

✦ The Red Butterfly Wing, cultivated by Khamarul Rezan Lim Abdullah, 58, was said to not only effectively treat cancer, but was also capable of treating systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), dengue, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, asthma, migraine, sinus, measles and intestinal problems, such as gastritis, constipation and diarrhoea.

Much like brewing tea, the water-soluble extracts are boiled before consuming. Although the Red Butterfly Wing foliage is available in many colours, only the green ones are used in this medical research.

So far, the foliage extracts have left no side effects on users.

UPM will conduct further research on the efficacy of the Red

Butterfly Wing foliage in the second stage through screenings and pre-clinical trials.

The tree can grow to about 2m high, and to speed up its germination, shoots must always be cut.

UPM's Department of Biomedical Sciences, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences lecturer and researcher Associate Professor Dr Latifah Saiful Yazan said the second stage's research outcome would be tested on animals (in vivo).

"Breast cancer cells will be injected into mice and then they will be treated with the Red Butterfly Wing foliage extracts.

"The second stage of the study, which will also examine the chemical profiles of the leaves, will use part of the Enterprise Innovation Fund (EIF), totalling RM300,000, allocated by the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (Mosti)."

The first in-vitro screening, conducted in 2013, using the foliage extracts on six cancer cells sequences that were difficult to treat, including breast, lung, colon, cervix and ovary cancers, found that the most sensitive cells were the breast cancer cells.

Besides for replanting purposes, the fund will be used to buy equipment such as shredder, wrapping machines and for product branding.

She also said Khamarul had started replanting the trees, which would be fully grown within three months before the leaves could be harvested.

"These ongoing efforts may be able to pave the way to find ingredients or remedy to deal effectively with cancer," she said.