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If you can't concentrate in class, always feel sleepy during lessons and find it hard to cope with your daily routine, you may want to try out the latest localised mental health screening tool online.

The Mental Health Assessment System (Sistem Penilaian Kesihatan Minda) is accessible at <http://apps.care.upm.edu.my/kajiselidik/kesihatanminda> through a mobile phone app or desktop browser.

It is being developed under an international research grant to determine the mental well-being and quality of life among university students in Malaysia and Iran.

The link is managed by the research team involved in this study, assisted by the Cancer Resource and Education Centre (CaRE) of Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

CaRE deputy director Professor Dr Sherina Mohd Sidik said although the link is being upgraded before data collection begins, it is still usable and will provide those taking the test with a response of whether they are facing depression and anxiety.

"We have provided our email addresses and phone number (CaREHelpline) in case the person wants to contact us for consultation," said Dr Sherina.

However, the objective is to collect data from university students for one year beginning from March or April.

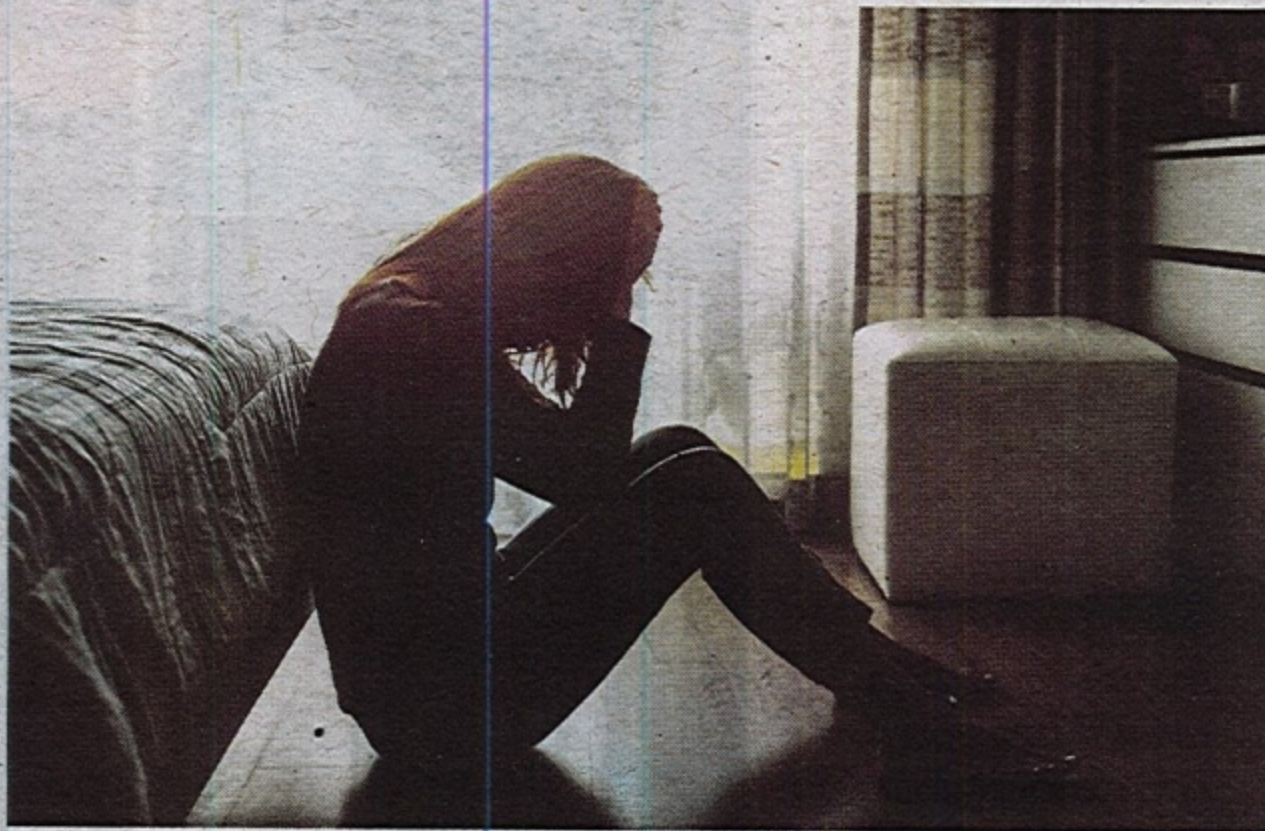
"We are waiting for ethics approval from UPM.

"We also need to obtain permission from the selected universities in Malaysia," she said.



**Dr Sherina Mohd Sidik**

# Nervous and edgy? Check your mental health



*University students face a high risk of depression and anxiety.*

Why use university students as subjects in the mental health assessment system?

Dr Sherina said the reason is that many studies have found a high risk of depression and anxiety among university students.

"University students encounter many varieties of stress, including a heavy workload and examinations. Therefore, these mental health disorders need to be well addressed to improve their academic performance and social function.

"Good mental health is vital for an in-

dividual to function productively. Students with good mental health and quality of life have been found to have better academic performance, good health and higher motivation to find good jobs in future," she said.

The Mental Health Assessment System link is based on the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) and Generalised Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7) scale.

PHQ-9 is a self-report questionnaire, comprising nine questions based on the nine DSM-IV criteria for major depression.

The GAD-7 is also a self-report, seven-item questionnaire, which is used to measure the level of anxiety.

"We hope that by developing the PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scale into an online assessment system, the prevalence and risk factors of depression and anxiety among university students can be identified.

"Students who are at risk will be invited to join a web-based intervention programme. The programme aims to improve their mental health and quality of life.

"It will be developed by the research team based on data gathered from the study (such as the prevalence and risk factors)," said Dr Sherina.

The Malaysian data will be combined with those collected from Iran, and the results will be compared.

"It is important to identify university students with mental health problems early. They constitute a large and important segment of a country's young population. The Mental Health Assessment System will help reduce depression and anxiety among university students in Malaysia through early intervention.

"Improving their mental health and quality of life will, hopefully, improve not only their personal lives, but also the behaviour of other groups in the society.

"As they are the future leaders of the country, university students can be promoters of good mental health to themselves, their families and, consequently, their society," said Dr Sherina.