

Elderly care homes told to pre-register by Feb 28

PETALING JAYA: Elderly care homes that are not registered with the Social Welfare Department are urged to pre-register their residents and staff with the Health Ministry as this will enable them to obtain the vaccine in the second phase of the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme.

According to the ministry's Family Health Development Division's elderly health sector senior principal assistant director, Dr Noraliza Noordin Merican, unregistered elderly care homes may miss out on the chance to ensure their clients are protected if they stay below the radar.

Dr Noraliza said these senior citizens needed to be vaccinated as they are in the high-risk group, and generally live in relatively confined areas.

She pointed out that data have shown that Covid-19 mortality rates are especially high among the elder-

ly, and as such, should be protected from the virus, and more so if they live in nursing homes.

"Once there is a case in the centre, the disease will spread like wildfire," she said during a forum on vaccination for staff and residents of care homes organised by Health Ministry, Social Welfare Department, Association for Residential Aged Care Operators of Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and the Malaysian Society of Geriatric Medicine that was hosted on Facebook yesterday.

However, Dr Noraliza clarified that the government has no intention to penalise those from unregistered care homes.

"We do not want to leave them behind. We only want to give them the same services. Everyone should have the same right to get the vaccine," she said, adding that through pre-registering, the ministry can lock-in the number of vaccine doses required for elderly care homes. The

last day for pre-registration is Feb 28.

Social Welfare Department elderly division director Azmir Kassim said of the 17 senior citizen care institutions under their care, only three had reported an outbreak, with 120 cases out of 2,500 persons.

Azmir noted that most of the cases happened in red zone areas such as Johor and Kuala Lumpur.

"We found most of the cases originated from the care workers because they were the ones who went in and out of the place. It shows that awareness among the care workers needs to be improved as it is not the fault of the elderly persons," he said.

However, during the forum, some elderly care home operators raised concerns over the presence of undocumented foreign workers working in such homes, as well as vaccine hesitancy among some clients and their families.

On this, Dr Noraliza said the government had already committed to

provide free vaccination for all, including foreign workers.

She also assured them that there will be doctors who will assess a senior citizen's condition to ensure they are suitable to be vaccinated.

"That is why in the pre-registration forms, we have asked what underlying disease(s) they have so that we will be able to assess them," she said.

In a video clip shared at the forum, Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry deputy minister Datuk Ahmad Amzad Mohamed said since the beginning of the pandemic, almost 70% of deaths were among those aged 60 and above, thus underscoring the importance of reducing the risk of infections in these institutions.

Watch the video
TheStarTV.com

