

Many laud MOH's decision on children's vaccination

PETALING JAYA: Health experts and parents agree that the Health Ministry's (MOH) latest announcement on children's vaccination would encourage parents to get their children vaccinated promptly.

The decision will be a good way to persuade more parents to register their children for Covid-19 vaccination, said Malaysia Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai.

"Some parents are still worried about adverse effects following immunisation (AEFI) and there are parents who believe that the disease is mild in children.

"It is obvious that the higher the rate of vaccination in the population including children, the better would be the protection rate," he added.

Dr Koh also said that by removing Clause Two in the consent form, it would also help in building confidence among parents to get their children vaccinated.

The clause that states that "I am responsible for the risks that may occur to children as a result of my decision/action because the benefits of the vaccine far outweigh the side effects" was removed by the MOH to avoid confusion among parents.

On Wednesday, the Deputy Health Minister I Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali announced that there will be no more vaccines offered as the first dose under the National Covid-19 Immunisation Programme for Children (PICKids) after May 15.

He said the deadline was set due to the low take-up rate, which could lead to high vaccine wastage.

He said the Comirnaty Covid-19 vaccine for children would no longer be offered at any public and private health facilities in Malaysia while the Coronavac (Sinovac) vaccine could only be obtained for a fee at private facilities.

Universiti Putra Malaysia epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said that while the decision would probably create awareness among parents, it might also create dissatisfaction as they would be charged for the service after the stipulated date.

She suggested that MOH come up with a better mechanism that would still provide free vaccines while avoiding supply waste if demand was not met.

In order to protect the population from the virus, Dr Malina added that the children age group should achieve around 70% to 80% of vaccination rate.

Currently, only 38.6% or 1,371,120 children aged five to 12 have received their first dose and around 195,865 have completed the vaccination.

Chief clerk Emma Muzaffar, 35, from Kuala Lumpur, said that she has low confidence in the efficacy of the vaccine for her children.

"Even after May 15, I would not consider vaccinating my children," said Emma, who has three children below the age of 12.