

CodeBlue Launches Poll On Health Workers' Mental Health

We Need A National Plan To Combat Dengue – Ahmad Mahfuz Gazali

By CodeBlue | 19 April 2023

Experts have predicted that cases of dengue fever will hit an all-time high this year, and cases are expected to peak in 2024 and 2025.

I feel compelled to respond to the article titled [“Multiple Measures Employed To Keep Mosquitoes Away”](#), published in *The Star* on March 11, 2023.

A sentence from the article that has given rise to some worry is “The Local Government Ministry’s guideline is to complement the Health Ministry’s effort in dengue control, whereby our main focus is to control mosquitoes, especially the Aedes breeding grounds, by keeping areas clean”.

We now understand that controlling the mosquito population is crucial, as the Health Ministry has employed a new strategy via the Institute of Medical Research by introducing Wolbachia-carrying mosquitoes into hot-spot areas of dengue fever.

The female Aedes mosquitoes that carry the Wolbachia parasite will prevent the growth of the dengue virus in other Aedes mosquitoes, preventing the dengue virus from being transmitted to humans.

We commend the government’s efforts to seriously control the Aedes mosquitoes as the vector of the dengue virus.

However, [experts have predicted](#) that cases of dengue fever will hit an all-time high this year, and cases are expected to peak in 2024 and 2025.

Indeed, we must do more to stop the dengue epidemic from happening in our country.

We definitely need a comprehensive national plan to combat and eradicate dengue, with multiple measures employed in the future.

United States President Joe Biden reignited the [Cancer Moonshot programme](#) in January 2022, and set a new national goal to combat cancer.

The programme was initially launched when he was Vice-President in 2016.

The relaunched programme aims to reduce the death rate from cancer by at least 50 per cent over the next 25 years, improve the experience of people and their families living with and surviving cancer, and ultimately, end cancer as we know it today.

This is an example where a long-term programme with clear goals, supported by political parties, can be achieved. We should try to emulate this strategy to combat dengue fever.

We successfully managed the Covid-19 pandemic when our country transitioned from the pandemic to the endemic phase on April 1, 2022.

This would not have been possible without the cooperation of everyone with regard to practising personal hygiene, wearing a face mask, social distancing, and other appropriate practices.

Furthermore, our country mandated the Covid-19 vaccine in 2021, leading to more than 84 per cent of the population completing their two primary vaccine doses.

In addition, we know that Covid-19 may cause severe disease in the elderly, people with health comorbidities, pregnant women, and immunocompromised individuals.

The latest weapon to combat Covid-19 is the administering of Paxlovid, an oral antiviral pill that can be taken at home to keep high-risk patients from getting hospitalised.

Last but not least, the MySejahtera app has been tremendously helpful in monitoring Covid-19 patients while they are undergoing quarantine at home.

When we consider all the tools available, it was a no-brainer that our country was able to control Covid-19. However, these tools have not been made available for us to fight dengue fever.

We still do not know which the high-risk individuals will develop dengue hemorrhagic fever, which could lead to death.

In addition, no approved vaccines to prevent the infection or drugs from treating the patients are available yet in our country.

Dengue fever is not new in our country, as major outbreaks have been reported in 1998, 2008, 2015, and 2019.

Despite leading to less than one per cent of deaths, more than hundreds of thousands of cases have been reported during the significant outbreaks.

Therefore, let us work together to formulate a national action plan to help combat and eradicate dengue fever soon.

Ahmad Mahfuz Gazali is a senior lecturer in the Industrial Biotechnology Programme, Faculty of Industrial Sciences and Technology, Universiti Malaysia Pahang.

- This is the personal opinion of the writer or publication and does not necessarily represent the views of *CodeBlue*.

Aedes mosquitoes

dengue

dengue fever