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Asthma goes up 25% in haze

S'gor sees increase of conjunctivitis and respiratory infection too

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SELANGOR saw a 25% increase in asthma cases due to the ongoing haze that has almost reached dangerous levels over the past week, forcing people indoors and schools in the whole state to shut down.

"Cases like conjunctivitis and respiratory tract infection increased by 3% in this hazy weather," said Selangor Health Department director Datuk Dr Khalid Ibrahim.

He said this during a press conference after launching the World Blood Donor's Day 2019 celebration at Dewan Jubli Perak in Shah Alam.

"Although there is an increase, the numbers are not really significant because I believe that Malaysians are now more aware of the haze and know what to do to protect themselves."

He added that the department sent a daily report to the Crisis Preparedness Response Centre to update them on daily cases in Selangor.

Dr Khalid again reminded people to stay indoors if possible and put on face masks if they were going out.

At the event, blood donors who have been giving generously since they were teenagers were celebrated and shown appreciation with an award and luncheon.

Organised by Tengku Ampuan Rahimah Hospital (HTAR) Klang together with Selangor Health Department, this event saw five blood donors awarded and recognised for their charitable efforts.

"I have been donating blood since I was 19 years old, and it started when I was still in college where my lecturer told me that giving blood is the highest form of gift I can give to mankind," said donor P. Poobalan.

Poobalan, who is now 56 years old, said he made it a point to donate blood at least twice a year and more if possible.

"I cannot donate as and when I please because my blood type is O negative, which is rare and in high demand.

"So I donate when the hospital calls me up and I will make my way there immediately to give blood," he said.

As all male blood donors will need a 60-day gap between each



Dr Khalid (standing centre, white shirt) with the award recipients and representatives from various organisations and companies that have supported and hosted blood donation drives.

blood donation session, Poobalan said that sometimes he was eager to donate in the middle of the gap but had to stop himself from doing so.

Female donors, on the other hand, have to wait at least three months after their last donation before being able to donate blood again.

Fellow donor Lim Siew Cheng has donated a total of 60 times since she first started giving blood at age 29.

"I just want to help those in need by donating blood at least three times a year, more if possible," she said.

The 54-year-old said she strove to maintain a healthy lifestyle and did line dancing three times a week to keep fit.

Meanwhile, KR Manickam Meenachusundaram was selected as an apheresis donor and can donate blood every two weeks if he

wants to.

Apheresis donation separates platelets and plasma from the blood and the remaining blood is pumped back into the donor.

While normal blood donation takes 30 minutes, apheresis takes up to an hour and can only be done wherever the machine is available.

"Not everyone can be an apheresis donor, it depends on your platelet count and size of vein because blood is pumped back in," said Manickam, adding that the process might not be suitable for those with smaller veins.

The 50-year-old, who has donated over 51 times, said he was glad to be given this opportunity to donate his platelets and plasma to those in need.

Dr Khalid presented the awards to the recipients at the celebration.

"I am very thankful to all those who have voluntarily donated throughout the year to ensure there is sufficient supply in our blood bank.

"Last year, a total of 27,709 bags of blood was collected in Selangor and 33% were contributed by new donors," he said.

He urged more people to step forward to donate blood and that it would take only 2% of Selangor's population donating to ensure the blood bank was well-stocked.

"Now we are able to have sufficient supply thanks to our return donors who keep coming back to contribute."

He said HTAR was the state's blood donation centre and the supply was shared among government hospitals in Shah Alam, Sabak Bernam, Banting, Tanjung Karang and nearby private hospitals.