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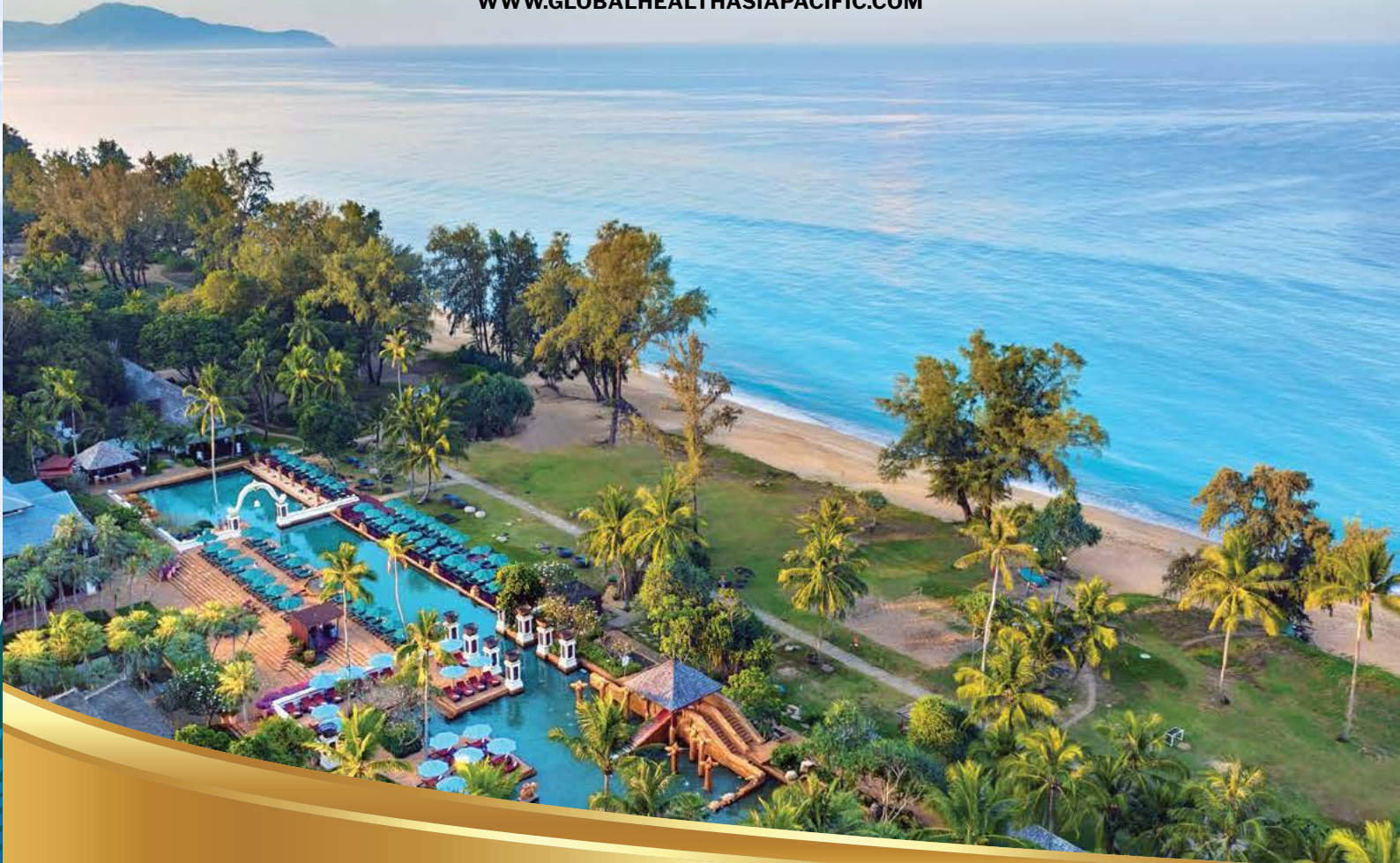


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Printed by: Times Offset (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd

(194695-W)

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

The COVID pandemic and its aftermath continue to remind the world of the devastating impact infectious diseases can have on our societies. Beyond the dramatic death toll and disruption to our daily lives, COVID-19 triggered social fear and racial discrimination and even violence against groups mistakenly blamed for spreading the virus. A similar pattern was ignited by AIDS, another infectious disease that has claimed the lives of more than 40 million people since it was first identified in the 1980s. Like COVID-19, it unleashed unfounded fears and forced many of its sufferers to face discrimination and bear social stigmas, particularly those in the LGBTQ community.



In this issue, we report on the treatment advancements that are giving us the tools to potentially eliminate HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, in the near future even in the absence of a cure or vaccine. However, lack of funding and global inequities, as well as discrimination, stigma, and misconceptions surrounding the disease, are still hampering prevention and treatment services. These are all issues that will need to be tackled if we are to end AIDS.

In another piece, Dr EE Zhang, physician, author, and healthy lifestyle advocate, shared her expert guidance on how to lead a healthy lifestyle. She recommends setting realistic goals that can make our food choices healthy in the long term while also recognising that occasional treats are a valuable part of our life. In her words: "A diet does not always have to be perfect, and there is no shame in that."

Finally, we report on the growing evidence that exercise is an effective treatment for depression. Considering the scale of the problems associated with depression and the lack of treatment services around the globe, exercise should be medically recommended as a standard approach to depression.

Gabriele Bettinazzi

Editor

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Global Health Asia-Pacific is a publication of HealthFYX Pte Ltd. 15 Scotts Road, #04-08 Thong Teck Building (15 Scotts), Room No. 12, Singapore 228218

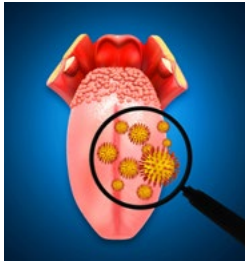
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# You Ask, They Answer



**Q** : How common are twin pregnancies and what are the main causes?

**A** : A twin pregnancy is a multiple pregnancy that occurs when more than one egg is fertilised. There are two types of twins:

- **Identical twins**

Also known as monozygotic twins, these are formed when one fertilised egg splits into two babies with the same genetic information. Identical twins may share a placenta and an amniotic sac, or they may share a placenta and each have their own amniotic sacs.

- **Non-Identical twins**

Also known as dizygotic twins, these are formed when two eggs are fertilised by two sperm, producing two genetically different babies.

It's estimated that one in 250 pregnancies results in twins naturally.

The chances of having identical twins is very rare, around 3-4 per 1,000 live births.

The causes of twin pregnancies are:

- Hereditary — family history is the most common cause.
- Age — Older women, women older than 35 years.
- History of twin pregnancies.
- Artificial Reproductive Technology — IVF / IUI.
- Ovarian stimulation drugs — helps produce more eggs.

**Q** : Are there higher chances of complications (for the babies or the mother) and of preterm delivery?

**A** : All multiple pregnancies are considered high risk and therefore have higher chances of complications.

Three out of five twin pregnancies will end up with premature deliveries.

The most common complications for twin pregnancies are premature deliveries, i.e., before 37 weeks. Premature babies are small, and their delivery can lead to low birth weight and breathing and feeding issues, leading to higher risk of infections. Many of these premature babies will need to be

managed at a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), which is very expensive.

Other complications to the mothers include a higher risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension, anemia, gestational diabetes, post-partum haemorrhaging, and a higher risk of miscarriage.

**Q** : Do women who are pregnant with twins require more frequent check-ups and gain more weight?

**A** : Antenatal care for twin pregnancies, as these are considered high risk, will require more frequent visits to the doctor, including the requirement that care take place at a tertiary centre. The hospital care of these pregnant mothers has to consist of senior obstetricians, neonatologists, blood banks, and a hospital with operating theatre facilities.

The antenatal visits will usually take place every two weeks to assess foetal growth (both babies) as well as to screen the mother for any complications, as mentioned above. The mother needs to be closely monitored for any early signs of complications or premature delivery. These antenatal check ups should be done by an obstetrician well-versed with high risk pregnancies. The mother will be required to take extra folic acid and iron supplements to prevent anemia. Routine blood pressure monitoring, as well as weight gain, has to be documented.

The pregnant mother has to also increase her protein and calorie intake.

Pregnant mothers with twin pregnancy are expected to gain about 16-24KG (normal weight gain for a singleton pregnancy is about 11-15KG).

**Q** : How can prospective parents reduce the risk of complications?

**A** : Twin pregnancy mothers must have regular antenatal care at a specialised hospital with a dedicated team of doctors.

These mothers must maintain a healthy diet and a healthy weight. They need to be aware of medical complications such as hypertension, diabetes, anemia, preterm delivery, and risks of miscarriage. They also need to take adequate prenatal supplements, such as folic acid, calcium, vitamin D, and iron, while avoiding alcohol, smoking, and drugs. They need to know the risks of possible complications as well as the symptoms of those complications. Finally, they need to visit their obstetrician regularly.

## Dr Somaskandar Sivasuntharam

Dr Somaskandar Sivasuntharam is a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology at Gleneagles Hospital Penang.



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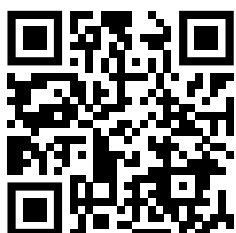
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# You Ask, They Answer



**Q** : What's Huntington's disease and its telltale signs?

**A** : Huntington's disease (HD) is an inherited condition caused by a single abnormal gene that comes from your affected parent. It is said that if you inherit the abnormal gene you will definitely develop the condition. In most people, it presents in mid-life, but it can present at any age. The abnormal gene is thought over time to cause some nerve cells in the brain to become unwell and stop working and then die. This leads to problems in the patient who can then present with abnormalities of movement, typically dance-like flicking movements called chorea that affect all parts of the body, often with a change in personality along with irritability, slowness, and loss of empathy and thinking abilities. So these are some of the telltale signs.

**Q** : Who should have a genetic test? Can treatment be started to reduce such risk?

**A** : Taking a genetic test for HD is a personal choice. In some people, they want to know whether they carry the abnormal gene even if they have no symptoms or features of HD. This

predictive genetic test is available in many countries. In people with symptoms and signs of HD, they can also have a diagnostic genetic test to confirm the diagnosis. In all parts of the world, but to varying degrees, there are other genetic conditions that can look like HD, and many of these can be looked for if the HD gene test comes back negative. Indeed, there are also non-genetic conditions that can look like HD, but in these cases there is typically no family history. There are currently no treatments that reduce the risk of having HD. However, some countries offer IVF as a way of ensuring that the implanted fertilised egg does not carry the abnormal HD gene.

**Q** : What are the treatment options and which benefits can patients expect from them?

**A** : There are currently no curative treatments for HD. All the drugs currently in use can only help the symptoms and signs, and this includes drugs that help suppress the chorea (e.g., drugs like tetrabenazine, olanzapine), drugs that can help mood disturbances which are common in HD (e.g., anti depressants, anxiolytics), and drugs to help with sleep problems which are also common in this condition. We have no drugs that help with memory problems unless these are caused by low mood. There are also many other therapies that may help patients, such as speech and language therapy and dietary advice and supplements (as weight loss can be a big problem). Most patients obtain some benefit from these drugs, but typically they only alleviate aspects of the problem rather than rid the patient of them.

**Q** : Do you have any advice for caregivers who take care of people with Huntington's?

**A** : It can be very difficult managing people with HD because of the problems they have around mental health, mood, and physical control. Patients with HD also have little insight into their condition and this includes others' feelings towards them- as such they sometimes seem rather unconcerned and uncaring to those trying to help them. It is normally best as a caregiver to be aware of this and to also understand that the patient may not be able to follow logical arguments. Therefore, it is often best to work around problems rather than confront them. It is important to ensure you are well supported by services so that you, the caregiver, do not get worn out and unwell.

## Dr Roger Barker

Dr Roger Barker is Professor of Clinical Neuroscience and Honorary Consultant in Neurology at the University of Cambridge and at Addenbrooke's Hospital.



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# You Ask, They Answer



## **Q**: What's syphilis and what are its telltale signs?

**A**: Syphilis is a highly infectious disease caused by the spirochete bacterium, *Treponema pallidum*.

There are three clinical stages of syphilis — Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary. It is said to be latent between the secondary and tertiary stages.

Forget about telltale signs! Most cases of syphilis are discovered by the routine blood tests that all sexually active people should take after a risky encounter, or on meeting a new partner. Most cases are without any telltale signs or symptoms and are silent.

The only reliable way of detecting the infection is by having a full Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) screen and remember that it takes 6-10 weeks after catching syphilis for the antibodies to show up in the blood test. The advice is to go for a STI screening test 1-2 weeks after a risk encounter to check

for gonorrhea, Chlamydia, and *Mycoplasma genitalium*, and to set base line bloods, and then repeat the blood test 6-10 weeks later to rule out Syphilis, Hepatitis B, and HIV.

The primary stage of syphilis, which is seen shortly after catching the infection, presents as a painless ulcer or sore — the chancre. Because it is painless and may be on hidden parts of the body like the vulva, around the anus, or in the mouth, it is frequently missed. A medical practitioner, experienced in dark ground microscopy, can detect 50 percent of syphilis cases from the fluid from the chancre, and this rises to more than 95 percent if molecular polymerase chain reaction, or PCR, is available. PCR allows doctors to amplify or copy DNA for analysis.

The chancre is usually painless and will heal up spontaneously, with most of those infected not even realising they are infected, especially if the chancre is in a part of the body that is not usually seen.

Following infection, syphilis goes silent for a while, say 2-3 months, then some of those infected will go on to show signs of the next stage, Secondary syphilis — fever, swollen glands, and a rash. A rash on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet is characteristic. We are also seeing some patients present with vision or hearing loss, which is due to infection of the nervous system. Not everybody goes through the secondary stage, but they remain infected, and the infection can progress.

If undiagnosed and untreated, syphilis then progresses to the latent phase, where it lies completely silent, without any signs or symptoms and can only be detected by a specific blood test.

About 25 percent of those infected progress to the tertiary phase where it can affect any part of the body — heart, blood vessels, bones, skin, liver, and especially the nervous system which can end up with many manifestations, including dementia. At this stage, damage may have been done, and treatment may be too late.

Whilst there are many signs and symptoms of syphilis, most cases are silent — asymptomatic. They are only diagnosed by taking a blood test, and most cases of syphilis are diagnosed in this way.

There is a specific battery of blood tests that are taken to diagnose the infection. It takes 6-8 weeks for the antibodies to the infection to form in the body, so it is important not to rely on a blood test taken soon after the sexual risk encounter, but to repeat the tests 6-12 weeks later, the same as when screening for HIV infection.

When syphilis was very common in the pre-antibiotic era, it was the practice to do routine tests for syphilis on anyone who presented with a rash or needed admission to a psychiatric hospital. In the US at that time, syphilis was so common that many states made it mandatory to be tested for syphilis prior to marriage.

### **Q: Which are the most common routes of transmission?**

**A:** There is only one mode of transmission - SEX. Especially anal receptive sex, but any type of penetrative or skin-to-skin sex will do. Oral sex is included.

### **Q: What are the health risks associated with syphilis?**

**A:** You can pass it on to others, you can become unwell, it can give you rashes, bone problems, it can affect your heart and blood vessels, it can cause psychosis, blindness, deafness, and paralysis. It can affect every part of the body. Its manifestations are protean. As Sir William Osler said more than 100 years ago, “The physician who knows syphilis knows medicine.”

### **Q: Who are good candidates for testing?**

**A:** Anybody who is having sex, especially with not known partners, and especially with someone who has a high risk background, such as Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), or comes from an area where syphilis is common.

### **Q: Are antibiotics effective at curing most cases?**

**A:** The right antibiotic is extremely effective at clearing and curing the infection. The challenge is the diagnosis. Unless you go for testing, the infection may lie silent and undetected for years, spread to others, and do its worst.

### **Q: Are people with other sexually transmitted diseases like HIV at a greater risk of having syphilis? Why?**

**A:** If a person has taken the risk to catch one infection, there is the risk of catching others. Today, with the popularity and high degree of effectiveness of PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis) for HIV, protection against HIV acquisition is available, and there is the potential to revert to risky sexual practices.

### **Q: What can people do to prevent syphilis?**

**A:** Quality sex — have sex with someone you know, can trust, and have a relationship with. If that’s not possible, use a condom and always get a sexual partner’s name and phone number so you can let them know if a problem arises.

In some places, the use of DoxyPEP is being considered. Taking a short course of this antibiotic immediately after a sexual encounter can considerably reduce the risk of catching syphilis and chlamydia, but not gonorrhoea. Use of DoxyPEP has resulted in a reduction of 50 percent of syphilis cases in some areas. However, the long-term consequences of the widespread use of the antibiotic remain controversial. DoxyPEP is particularly promoted in areas with inadequate sexual health care infrastructure and resources. However, it would be more appropriate to look after the sexual health resources and needs of the community.

### **Dr Derek Freedman**

Dr Derek Freedman is a sexually transmitted disease consultant who runs a private practise in Dublin, Ireland.



# The Fountain of Youth in a Syringe

## *Unlocking Timeless Beauty with Hyaluronic Acid Fillers*

In the quest for eternal youth, a groundbreaking solution has emerged in the world of aesthetics: hyaluronic acid fillers. These innovative treatments have revolutionized how we combat the signs of aging, offering a non-surgical route to a more youthful appearance. This article delves into the transformative power of hyaluronic acid fillers and their role in turning back the clock on aging.

Aging affects our facial features in several profound ways, leading to wrinkles, fine lines, and loss of volume. The culprits behind these changes include bone resorption, deflation of fat pads, increased muscle strength leading to dynamic wrinkles, and thinning of the skin. Each of these factors contributes to the overall appearance of aging, but hyaluronic acid fillers offer a solution to counteract these effects.



### **Bone Resorption and Facial Structure**

One of the key aging processes is the resorption of bone in our faces, which diminishes structural support and alters facial proportions. Hyaluronic acid fillers can be placed directly on the bone to restore lost volume and redefine facial contours, combating the sagging and sunken appearance that comes with age.

### **Deflation of Fat Pads**

As we age, the fat pads in our face, which provide volume and shape, begin to deflate and shift. This results in a hollowed-out appearance and noticeable volume loss. By reinflating these fat pads, hyaluronic acid fillers restore youthful contours and fullness.

### **Increased Muscle Strength and Dynamic Wrinkles**

Surprisingly, increased muscle strength in the face can lead to more pronounced lines and wrinkles. Hyaluronic acid fillers can be strategically placed to relax these overactive muscles, smoothing out wrinkles and softening facial expressions.

## Thinning of the Skin

The natural decrease in collagen and elastin production leads to thinner skin, making it more prone to fine lines and wrinkles. Hyaluronic acid fillers help by improving skin hydration and texture, encouraging collagen production, and restoring skin thickness for a smoother, more youthful look.

## The Advantages of Hyaluronic Acid Fillers

Unlike surgical options, hyaluronic acid fillers offer a quick and relatively risk-free method to address aging signs. They are derived from a naturally occurring substance in our bodies, known for maintaining skin volume and moisture. However, as we age, our natural levels of hyaluronic acid decline, leading to visible aging signs. HA fillers counteract this by providing immediate, natural-looking enhancements that are long-lasting and versatile. They can plump lips, restore cheek volume, and smooth nasolabial folds with minimal downtime.

## Benefits at a Glance:

**Instant Results:** Visible improvements are immediate, allowing individuals to enjoy a rejuvenated appearance right after treatment.

**Natural Enhancements:** Designed for subtlety, these fillers ensure enhancements that look and feel natural, avoiding an overdone appearance.

**Longevity:** Effects can last from nine months to two years, with the possibility of extending improvements with repeat treatments.

**Versatility:** HA fillers can address various concerns, offering a customized approach to beauty.

**Reversible:** If unsatisfied with the results, the treatment can be reversed using hyaluronidase, offering peace of mind.

It's vital to seek treatment from a qualified professional to ensure safety and achieve the best results. While complications are rare, it's important to be aware of potential side effects like bruising or swelling. A skilled practitioner

will create a tailored treatment plan, considering any individual sensitivities or allergies.

While the mythical Fountain of Youth remains undiscovered, hyaluronic acid fillers have brought us closer to achieving timeless beauty. These treatments provide a safe, effective way to reclaim a youthful glow, enhancing confidence without the need for surgery. As we continue to embrace the advances in aesthetic medicine, hyaluronic acid fillers stand out as a key tool in the anti-aging arsenal, offering a path to ageless beauty.



**Dr. Anna Hoo**  
Medical Director of  
Anna Hoo Clinic

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## Microscopic plastics might increase risk of heart attack and stroke

*If confirmed, the finding could lead to significant health risks due to ubiquitous plastic pollution*

**T**iny bits of plastics that can be found almost everywhere in the environment and even in human tissues have been associated with a surge in stroke, heart attack, and early death — a worrying finding given the staggering level of plastic pollution around the world.

Researchers in Italy analysed fatty plaques from the blood vessels of patients with diseased arteries and found the presence of microplastics or nanoplastics in more than half of them. These individuals were then assessed to be 4.5 times more likely to die from any cause or to have a stroke or heart attack in the 34 months following the observation compared to patients without the tiny particles.

Experts caution that this research doesn't prove tiny plastics cause health problems, as other factors, like socio-economic status, could be also responsible for the increased risk. However, previous lab research has shown that the amount of microplastics usually ingested by people while eating contaminated food can damage human cells or kill them.

Over the years, researchers have found microplastics in almost every corner of the world, from Antarctic sea ice to high mountains, as well as in the air, drinking water, and animal tissues. It's no surprise then that microplastics have also been found in human blood, breast milk, and placenta.

"Our data will dramatically impact cardiovascular health if confirmed because we are defenceless against plastic pollution," said Dr Raffaele Marfella, study author and professor of internal medicine at the University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli, according to the *Guardian*.



## First weight-loss drug approved by US health authorities to cut risk of heart disease and death

*The move reaffirms medication efficacy at reducing mortality and heart problems*

**T**he US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has greenlighted the use of semaglutide to reduce the risk of cardiovascular death, heart attack, and stroke in adults with obesity or overweight.

The drug, commercialised as Wegovy, is commonly prescribed for type 2 diabetes or chronic weight management, but a recent large clinical trial showed that it could also cut the risk of death from heart disease, reducing cardiovascular events by 20 percent. This finding was based on data from over 17,000 people in 41 countries who had previously suffered from a heart attack, stroke, or peripheral artery disease and who received either semaglutide or a placebo (dummy pill).

"Wegovy is now the first weight loss medication to also be approved to help prevent life-threatening cardiovascular events in adults with cardiovascular disease and either obesity or overweight," said Dr John Sharretts, director of the Division of Diabetes, Lipid Disorders, and Obesity in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, in a press release. "This patient population has a higher risk of cardiovascular death, heart attack and stroke. Providing a treatment option that is proven to lower this cardiovascular risk is a major advance for public health."

The FDA stresses that Wegovy should be prescribed in combination with increased physical activity and a diet aimed at reducing calories.





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### What does TDOX do?

Located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, TDOX Clinic is a premier regenerative health and beauty center committed to improving people's health and well-being. Health screening, aesthetic treatments, vitamin drips, cardiac health, and stem cell therapies are among the services we provide. Given that each individual's needs differ, our medical professionals must examine each individual's condition in order to maximise their health and beauty benefits.

One of our best-selling products is stem cell therapy, for which we spent extensively in our own research laboratory, Medixcell, to cultivate high-quality stem cells using cutting-edge biotechnology processes. Medixcell Lab produces Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSC), NK cells, Exosomes, and other products with a strong emphasis on safety and quality.

### What are the benefits of cellular therapy in simple terms, especially with regard to Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSC) and Natural Killer Cells (NK cells) treatments?

Mesenchymal Stem Cells (MSCs) are, to put it simply, your body's miracle repair squad. When you're injured or unwell, they can transform into different cell types and help you heal. They stimulate healing, reduce inflammation, and can even alleviate pain. MSCs act as a handyman for your body, making you feel better and healthier. MSCs have been employed in the TDOX Clinic for anti-aging, skin rejuvenation, reducing inflammation, regulating hormones, increasing endurance, boosting sexual functions, boosting immune system, boosting mental activities, improving memory, and improving sleep quality, among other things.

### Can you tell me more about your Medixcell Lab?

Medixcell is a cGMP-certified laboratory that follows Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMP) and complies to the National

Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency's (NPRA) criteria, as well as the Pharmaceutical Inspection Convention and the Pharmaceutical Inspection Cooperation Programme (PIC/S).

Being a cGMP laboratory, it is managed by highly qualified laboratory professionals to ensure compliance with local and international regulatory requirements.

The technology and materials for isolating, processing, and increasing autologous immune cells, such as natural killer cells (NK cells), T-lymphocytes, dendritic cells, and autologous/allogeneic stem cells, are the fundamental strengths of the Medixcell laboratory.

Our team of laboratory professionals is led by a Chief Scientist with over 20 years of experience in research and development, clinical trials involving immune cells and stem cells, as well as conducting stem cell research.

### What technologies are employed in the Medixcell lab for stem cell research, cultivation, and processing?

To ensure that our customers receive cGMP-grade stem cells, we begin by carefully selecting a healthy umbilical cord donor with no medical history. Following that, we go through numerous procedures to construct a master cell bank, including cell isolation, cell multiplication, and cell concentration. We culture stem cells from this cell bank for our customers who require them. In addition, to provide our customers peace of mind, we supply them with a Certificate of Assurance for the infused cells.

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## People who had lazy eye might be at increased risk of hypertension and heart attack

*Findings could help prevent or identify common health problems at an early stage*

**A**dults who suffered from lazy eye during childhood could be more likely to also have hypertension, obesity, and heart attacks, according to a new UK study.

Researchers at University College London asked more than 126,000 individuals aged 40 to 69 during their eye examinations whether they were treated for amblyopia, or lazy eye, and if they suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure, or a heart attack. The results showed that people who had childhood amblyopia were 29 percent more likely to develop diabetes, while also having 25 percent higher odds of having hypertension.

However, the researchers stressed their findings were only associational and do not prove that lazy eye problems cause health issues later on.

Amblyopia is a condition leading to reduced vision in one eye due to abnormal visual development and usually starts in childhood. The new study showed that even adults with no vision issues after recovering from amblyopia were still at an increased risk of health problems, though the relationship was stronger in adults who kept having vision problems in adulthood.

“It is rare to have a ‘marker’ in childhood that is associated with increased risk of serious disease in adult life, and also one that is measured and known for every child – because of population screening,” study author Professor Jugnoo Rahi from the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology and Great Ormond Street Hospital, said in a press release. “The large numbers of affected children and their families, may want to think of our findings as an extra incentive for trying to achieve healthy lifestyles from childhood.”



## Artificial intelligence can predict higher risk of heart attacks

*The new tool could offer lifesaving information to prevent deadly heart problems*

**A**nother promising research finding from the world of artificial intelligence (AI) suggests that it is able to identify who’s at higher risk of having a heart attack among people who undergo a CT scan for chest pain, providing an additional diagnostic tool that could save many lives.

While people with chest pain usually undergo a CT scan to check whether their arteries are narrowed in a way that may lead to future blockages causing heart attacks, most don’t show any signs of narrowing but will still suffer from potentially fatal heart attacks in the future.

Researchers from the University of Oxford analysed data from more than 40,000 people who underwent CT scans and fed different types of data, such as parameters around fat in inflamed arteries and their narrowing, into an AI system. They found this approach could predict that people with highly inflamed arteries had a 10-fold higher risk of dying from heart problems compared to individuals with lower levels of inflammation.

“Our study found that some patients presenting in hospital with chest pain – who are often reassured and sent back home – are at high risk of having a heart attack in the next decade, even in the absence of any sign of disease in their heart arteries. Here we demonstrated that providing an accurate picture of risk to clinicians can alter and potentially improve the course of treatment for many heart patients,” Professor Charalambos Antoniades, Director of the Acute Multidisciplinary Imaging & Interventional Centre at the University of Oxford, said in a press release.



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10. Consultation and Report



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### ACCREDITATIONS & AWARDS



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## Cancer burden projected to skyrocket in the next decades

*The impact will be mostly felt in low- and middle-income countries*

**M**ore than 35 million new cancer cases are estimated in 2050, a 77 percent surge compared to the 20 million cases in 2022, according to the latest data collected by The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the World Health Organization (WHO)'s cancer agency.

The staggering increase will be driven by several causes, including population ageing and growth, along with exposure to risk factors like tobacco, alcohol, obesity, and air pollution.

As is often the case in medicine, inequities mean that poorer nations will bear the brunt of cancer growth. While high human development index (HDI) countries will see the greatest increase in absolute numbers, with an additional 4.8 million new cases, proportional increases in low and medium HDI countries will reach the highest percentages, at 142 and 99 percent, respectively. Cancer deaths are also estimated to double in low and medium HDI nations.

The HDI is a measure of human development that takes into account several dimensions, such as a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable, and having a decent standard of living.

“Despite the progress that has been made in the early detection of cancers and the treatment and care of cancer patients – significant disparities in cancer treatment outcomes exist not only between high and low-income regions of the world, but also within countries. Where someone lives should not determine whether they live. Tools exist to enable governments to prioritise cancer care, and to ensure that everyone has access to affordable, quality services. This is not just a resource issue but a matter of political will,” Dr Cary Adams, head of UICC - Union for International Cancer Control, said in a WHO press release.



## New non-invasive test can help diagnose oral cancer

*The technique may identify the small number of people who require more invasive testing*

**A**n approach that measures proteins in the mouth can provide useful information for diagnosing oral cancer, sparing many patients an invasive and potentially harmful biopsy while identifying those who still require it.

Researchers from Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine brushed cells from oral lesions of people checking in at either dental clinics or the ear, nose, and throat department. They then devised a scoring system, based on the levels of certain proteins, to predict whether people had oral cancer. Their observations showed that early-stage cancers usually had high levels of the hBD-3 and low or normal levels of the hBD-2 proteins. For the discovery and validation phase of the study, researchers recruited 92 individuals who were being evaluated for oral squamous cell carcinoma, the most common malignant tumour developing in the head and neck areas.

“We found it [hBD-3] was not only promoting tumor growth but was overexpressed in the early stages of the disease, while another member, hBD-2, wasn't changing. This difference in levels of expression of the two proteins compared to the opposite side in the same patient led us to examine the BDI's ability to distinguish cancer from benign lesions,” study lead researcher Dr Aaron Weinberg, chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at the Case Western Reserve School of Dental Medicine, said in a University press release.

Oral cancers and precancerous lesions in the mouth are hard to diagnose early, one reason being that biopsies are expensive, invasive, and can lead to complications. The new approach might reduce about 95 percent of biopsies done in primary clinics by identifying only those people who may benefit from it, added Dr Weinberg. This diagnostic technique could make a big difference, especially in areas lacking adequate biopsy services.



# Synergistic Longevity Medicine

*Boosting Immunity and Combating Infectious Diseases*



In the pursuit of longevity, the integration of a comprehensive approach is essential, combining a healthy lifestyle with innovative immune-boosting treatments. This article explores various longevity medicine strategies with a focus on immune fortification, featuring interventions like Immune Fighter Plus, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT), Whole Body Hyperthermia, and other cutting-edge treatments.

## I. Immune Fighter Plus:

Immune Fighter Plus represents a multifaceted immune-boosting solution, incorporating Ozone Therapy, Myer's Cocktail, and Weber Laser. Ozone Therapy fosters an aerobic environment, hindering the growth of pathogens. Myer's Cocktail, an intravenous vitamin therapy, provides immune support and relieves inflammation. Weber Laser, utilizing red and blue lasers, contributes to immune health by increasing blood flow, reducing pressure, and offering anti-aging benefits. This comprehensive approach, integrating oxygenation, nutrient infusion, and laser therapy, synergistically enhances the immune system.

## II. Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT):

HBOT involves breathing pure oxygen in a pressurized chamber, stimulating the release of growth factors and stem cells. This promotes tissue healing and enhances immune function. By creating an oxygen-rich environment, HBOT reduces the likelihood of pathogen growth, contributing to a resilient immune system. Incorporating HBOT into a longevity strategy provides a holistic approach to immune health.

## III. Whole Body Hyperthermia:

Whole Body Hyperthermia elevates the body's temperature, inducing a controlled fever-like state.

This activates immune responses, including the release of white blood cells and interferons, aiding in the fight against infections. When integrated into a comprehensive longevity strategy, Whole Body Hyperthermia contributes to overall health and longevity by stimulating the immune system. The controlled fever state becomes a powerful ally in combating diseases.

## IV. Healthy Lifestyle Integration:

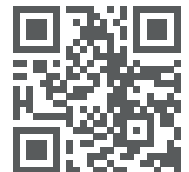
Beyond specific treatments, a healthy lifestyle forms the foundation of longevity medicine. Regular exercise, a balanced diet rich in essential nutrients, sufficient sleep, and stress management are integral components. Engaging in these practices synergistically supports the immune system, creating an environment conducive to overall health and longevity.

In shaping your youthful longevity, incorporating immune-boosting interventions such as Immune Fighter Plus, HBOT, and Whole Body Hyperthermia, alongside a holistic approach encompassing a healthy lifestyle, proper nutrition, and stress management, becomes crucial. VitalLife emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive strategy to fortify the immune system, contributing to a longer, healthier life. However, it's imperative to consult with healthcare professionals to tailor interventions for personalized and safe longevity practices.

Dr. Athasit Amorntanomchoke  
ANTI-AGING AND REGENERATIVE MEDICINE AND  
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**“VitalLife underscores the significance of a resilient and comprehensive strategy to fortify the immune system, thereby fostering youthful longevity and overall health for a longer, healthier life.”**



## Global forum on cervical cancer commits to eliminate the disease

*Commitments may save many women's lives*

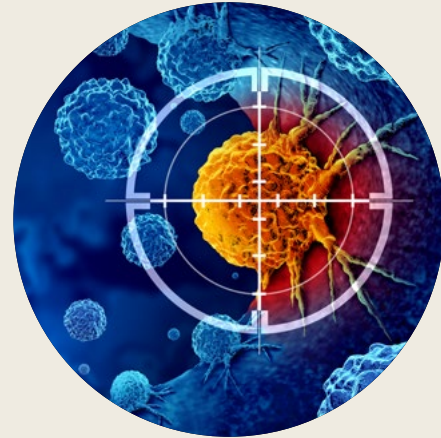
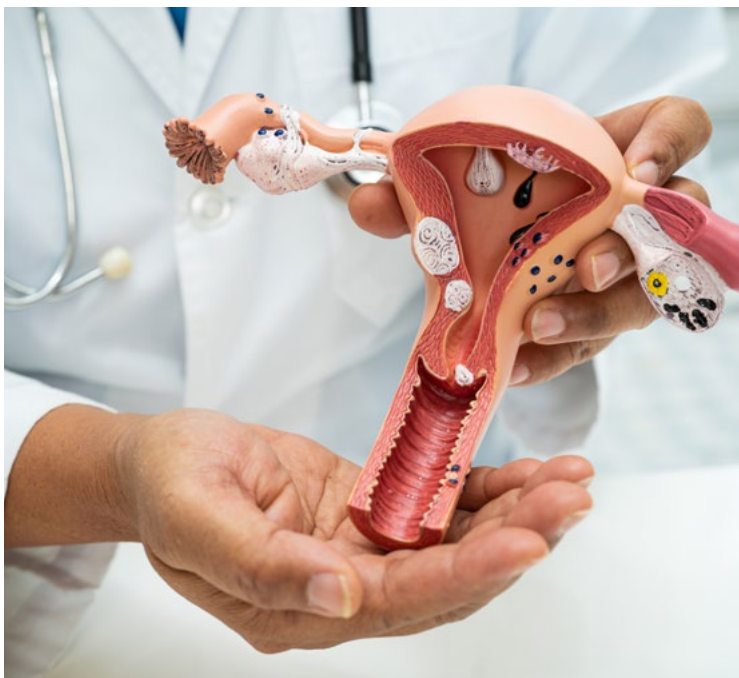
**G**overnments, donors, and other stakeholders have pledged to strengthen their commitment to ending cervical cancer by expanding vaccine coverage, screening, and treatment.

Gathering at the first Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Forum: Advancing the Call to Action in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, participants agreed to invest US\$600 million to fund the programmes in a move that could see a malignancy be eliminated for the first time in history.

Most cervical cancer cases are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, a common sexually transmitted condition that can be prevented with vaccination or successfully treated if detected early through regular screening. But limited prevention and screening means that every two minutes a woman dies from cervical cancer, mostly in low- and middle-income countries.

The Democratic Republic of Congo committed to introducing the HPV vaccine as early as possible, while Ethiopia set the target of vaccinating at least 95 percent of 14-year-old girls in 2024.

"We have the knowledge and the tools to make cervical cancer history, but vaccination, screening and treatment programmes are still not reaching the scale required," said Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, in a press release. "This first global forum is an important opportunity for governments and partners to invest in the global elimination strategy and address the inequities that deny women and girls access to the life-saving tools they need."



## Artificial intelligence could spot aggressive prostate cancers

*Approach may improve treatment of minority with deadlier disease*

**U**K researchers have identified two different subtypes of prostate cancer that might help doctors understand who's more likely to develop the deadlier form of the disease and thus requires treatment.

Prostate cancer is the most common malignancy in men, but in most cases the risk of dying is low. However, a minority of people with the condition are at a significant risk. Researchers used AI to analyse DNA changes in the prostate cancer samples of 159 people and managed to distinguish two forms called evotypes. People with one evotype, for instance, were twice as likely to suffer a recurrence of the disease. The AI analysis promises to significantly improve treatment given its ability to better select patients.

"The key problem in prostate cancer is identifying those 15% of men who will have more aggressive cancers that will spread to other organs and that will actually cause death," lead study author Professor David Wedge of Manchester Cancer Research Centre told the *Guardian*. "If we can identify those men, we can give them more robust treatment ... and you can leave alone the other 85% of men. That is beneficial because the surgery itself has a lot of side effects."

The hope is that a genetic test combined with standard staging and grading will offer more accurate prognoses and lead to tailored treatment options.



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# Tackling Diabetes and Obesity in Malaysia



**Bariatric Surgery (or weight loss surgery) is a procedure that helps and targets treating individuals with excessive obesity.**

**T**he prevalence of obesity and diabetes mellitus (often known simply as diabetes) among Malaysians has continued to increase significantly. The number of patients suffering from diabetes is estimated at 17.5% in 2015 and was expected to jump to 21% by the end of 2023.

Moreover, it is likely no surprise that more and more people are gaining weight, and the number of obese or overweight individuals in Malaysia has escalated to about 45%. In fact, Malaysia has one of the highest rates of obesity and overweight in the Asia Pacific region.

Bariatric Surgery (or weight loss surgery) is a procedure that helps and targets treating individuals with excessive obesity. “Although bariatric surgery is originally designed to promote treatment to the obese patients, today the term ‘metabolic surgery’ is used as it has remarkable positive outcomes for those with metabolic syndromes such as Type 2 Diabetes”, said Consultant General & Upper Gastrointestinal Surgeon, Dr Yeap Chee Loong.

In addition to that, the STAMPEDE study, which is a landmark paper published by The New England Journal of Medicine supports that Bariatric Surgery has proven its effectiveness with significant improvements to Type 2 Diabetes obese patients, compared with pharmaceutical intervention. “Obese diabetic patients who had undergone bariatric surgery had a greater capacity to control blood sugar with much fewer diabetes medication. Apart from weight-loss goals, it simultaneously leads to a healthier lifestyle and can change a person’s life for the better,” he said.

With more research, recently in India shows that the effect of bariatric surgery is profound in pre-existing diabetes patients. While diabetes is viewed as a chronic disease, bariatric surgery offers an unprecedented change; major improvement or even complete disease remission. Amongst insulin-dependent patients, this surgical treatment shows greater reduction in insulin usage hence it can effectively improve or even resolve diabetes.

On top of that, International Diabetes Organisation (IDO) suggests metabolic surgery treatment as an option for patients with Class 3 Obesity. Nonetheless, Class 1 Obesity patients may consider surgical treatment, particularly in uncontrolled diabetes obese individuals.

Dr Yeap said that metabolic surgery is recommended as option for Type 2 Diabetes overweight and obese patients, according to the Clinical Practice Guidelines 2015 by the Ministry of Health of Malaysia. However, the formidable challenge in Malaysia is the prejudicial attitude towards bariatric surgery in general public, the Consultant said.

Besides, the lack of motivation and public awareness in Malaysia remains as obstacle. Dr Yeap also said, financial help for weight loss surgery is a struggle to many patients despite its importance in improving their health and lifestyle.

“It is most important for practitioners to educate diabetes with excessive weight patients to mark bariatric surgery or metabolic surgery as the treatment option”, he said.

This operation can be performed laparoscopically in comparison to open surgery. Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy & Roux-en-Y Gastric Bypass are two of the more commonly performed methods in bariatric surgery. These procedures aim to make the stomach smaller, which results in one’s ingested food amount to reduce and consequently you will feel full with less food. Not only that, hormone physiological changes after bariatric surgery provide marked improvement in sugar control.

“For most patients with diabetes and excessive weight, there may be a chance to view life in a totally different way after weight loss surgery. Together with good aftercare, this is a life-changing surgery”, elaborated Dr Yeap. “Imagine the weight loss journey for some of these obese individuals who are now running marathons, at the same time effectively achieving their ideal healthy weight”, he said.



**Dr Yeap Chee Loong**

Consultant General,  
 Upper Gastrointestinal and  
 Obesity Surgeon  
 Consultant Robotic and  
 Laparoscopic Surgeon  
 Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur





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## Thailand provides funds to support tourists in case of accident

The programme aims to make the Southeast Asian nation more appealing to tourists



Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sport (MOTS), in collaboration with the National Institute of Emergency Medicine (NIEM), has set up a 50-million-Baht (US\$1.38 million) medical fund to assist overseas tourists who have accidents while visiting the country.

The coverage offers up to 500,000 Baht (US\$13,800) for accidental injury treatment, 300,000 Baht (US\$8,300) for permanent disability, sight loss, or permanent organ loss, and one million Baht (US\$27,700) in case of death.

"The Ministry of Tourism and Sports has initiated the "Assistance Scheme for Foreign Tourist Injury and Casualty" as part of our ongoing efforts to assure tourist safety and boost tourist confidence in Thailand," Sudawan Wangsuphakhosol, Minister of Tourism and Sports, said in a press release.

Compensation will be provided on a case-by-case basis in the event of accidents, crimes, disasters, or other events unless these are caused by tourists' carelessness or attempt to commit a crime. Only visitors who travel around the country until 31 August for tourism are eligible.

To enrol in the scheme, visitors can register online through the Thailand Traveller Safety system.

NIEM has also recommended setting up a Tourist Emergency Medical Assistance Centre to support both MOTS and tourist police who will process applications for eligible tourists while referring them to medical centres to receive care.

"By pooling our resources together to ensure tourists receive emergency medical services in time will help boost confidence among tourists regarding Thailand's safety standards. The cooperation will also promote the efficiency and quality of our emergency medical systems for the maximum benefit of tourists," Dr Atchariya Pangma, Secretary-General of NIEM, said in the press release.

## Malaysia offers visa-free entry to Chinese and Indian tourists

The move promises to boost medical tourism

Malaysia has started a visa-free programme for Chinese and Indian tourists who want to travel across the country for up to 30 days, starting from December 2023 until the end of this year, in a move stakeholders believe will also boost medical tourism. Visitors are only required to complete the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card online, a form that can be filled out up to three days before arrival.

Dr Mohamed Ali Abu Bakar, chief executive officer of the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, told *The Star* he was optimistic a greater number of Chinese and Indian medical tourists would visit the country because India and China were two of the main contributors to medical tourism in Malaysia. The new programme will make it easier for medical tourists to plan for treatment, get a second opinion, or do a follow-up.

"The implementation of this visa facility is certainly timely because many countries, including China, have relaxed the conditions for entering and exiting their countries following the transition to the endemic phase [of the COVID pandemic] which started two years ago," he said.

He added that Malaysia received more than one million medical tourists in 2023, a 15 percent increase over the previous year, while it's estimated that the sector will generate RM2.4 billion (US\$508 million) in revenue in 2024.







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## Chinese embassy warns of plastic surgery risks in Korea

Cosmetic procedures can carry life-threatening risks and also cause problems during immigration checks



**T**he Chinese embassy in Seoul has warned its citizens about the risks of travelling to South Korea to undergo plastic surgery, citing potential facial changes that could hamper identity checks at immigration points or even death, *Reuters* reported.

The warning came last January after a Chinese woman died following liposuction surgery at a clinic in Seoul.

“In recent years, many foreigners have come to South Korea for cosmetic surgery, and some people have been involved in medical disputes and surgical failures and even deaths have occurred,” the embassy said, according to *Reuters*.

South Korea is one of the most popular medical tourism destinations in the world, especially for people seeking plastic surgery. About 248,000 foreign nationals sought care in Korea in 2022, with 15.8 percent checking in at plastic surgery clinics, according to the country’s Ministry of Health and Welfare.

The embassy recommends its citizens carefully select intermediaries, clinics, or surgeons with adequate qualifications and sign clear contracts and keep medical records.

“If there is a major change in (your) postoperative appearance, or if you are still in the postoperative recovery stage, you should bring the surgical certificate when you leave the country,” the embassy added. This will help streamline immigration checks and avoid problems.

## Newsweek’s best hospitals in the world 2024

New entries make the list, highlighting improvements in healthcare systems around the world

**N**ewsweek has released its annual ranking of the best healthcare providers in the world, with many US and European hospitals dominating top positions but also new facilities outside those regions gaining recognition.

“This year, the list includes data on 2,400 hospitals across 30 countries. For the first time, Chile and Malaysia have been added to the ranking, which also includes the U.S., most of Western Europe and Scandinavia, 10 Asian countries, Australia and countries elsewhere in the Americas,” said Nancy Cooper, Newsweek Global Editor in Chief, in a statement.

The new rankings reflect the improvements in healthcare systems in many countries outside the US and Europe, with Malaysia offering a strong case in point. Two of the top providers in the country, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur and Sunway Medical Centre, ranked 223rd and 233rd, respectively, providing further proof that the country’s investment in the private sector is paying off.

The first Asian hospital on the list is Singapore General Hospital (SGH), followed by The University of Tokyo Hospital and Asan Medical Center in South Korea.

The ranking was compiled in partnership with Statista and was based on online surveys of more than 85,000 medical experts and patient satisfaction after discharge. It also took into account hygiene metrics and patient/doctor ratios.

“With so much at stake for individuals and institutions, reliable data is key. The Newsweek-Statista rankings provide crucial insights for patients, families and health care executives looking for profiles of an industry that will generate \$4.24 trillion worldwide in 2024,” Cooper concluded.







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## How venting can be healthy

*It's useful if done with good listeners*

People are often advised to express their negative emotions as this is believed to have significant health benefits. But experts caution that any positive impact will depend on several factors, like how often people vent, whom they open up to, and the feedback they receive.

“By and large, we do need to get our negative emotions out,” Dr Rachel Millstein, a staff psychologist in the behavioral medicine program and the Lifestyle Medicine Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, told the American Heart Association (AHA). “The ways we do it, though, that’s where it’s healthy or unhealthy, productive or unproductive.”

Research has shown a strong link between psychological and cardiovascular health, with psychological interventions having a beneficial impact on the heart, according to an AHA statement. Similarly, researchers have found that “social connectedness,” or having a number of relationships that work as a support system and help create a sense of belonging, can extend life expectancy and improve health, says the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For example, venting to people we trust can help us manage daily stress. “Calling a friend and letting it out can be helpful. It helps us feel connected to our social support networks, which is a big determinant of life satisfaction and overall well-being,” Dr Millstein told the AHA. This is particularly the case when speaking with someone who is supportive of your feelings even if they suggest a different opinion.

However, venting with someone who dismisses your feelings could be detrimental, says Dr Johnatan Shaffer, an associate professor of clinical health psychology at the University of Colorado. “It’s invalidating to share and get no response from the other person. It might make you feel like you don’t have worth or are not loveable,” he said to the AHA.

Dr Millstein added that venting could be counter-productive if the listener increases the intensity of negative feelings, while sometimes friends might find it difficult to cope with repeated venting sessions, and this could ruin the relationship.

Dr Shaffer recommends writing down one’s feelings if people don’t feel comfortable sharing them. Researchers have observed several health benefits associated with the habit of daily writing, such as healing from traumatic experience, lowering blood pressure, strengthening the immune system, and improving sleep, while also reducing depression and pain. He also advises talking to a therapist if people are enduring significant stress levels.

Both venting with another person and in writing can benefit from focusing on positives as well, such as things people are grateful for, because this helps spark positive feelings, he explained.

It may also be helpful venting with people with a good sense of humour. “And don’t forget that humour is a really good coping strategy,” said Dr Millstein, as “sometimes other people can help us see the funny side of things.” ■



Research has shown a strong link between psychological and cardiovascular health, with psychological interventions having a beneficial impact on the heart





## Integrating Wellness into IVF: The Role of Fertility Yoga

In the evolving landscape of reproductive health, the integration of holistic wellness practices alongside medical treatments has opened new avenues for enhancing fertility outcomes. Among these practices, fertility yoga stands out, backed by scientific evidence and medical research, for its role in supporting individuals and couples on their IVF journey.

Fertility yoga, a specialized form of yoga tailored to enhance reproductive health, offers a multi-faceted approach to improving the IVF experience. It combines physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation to address the physical and emotional stresses associated with fertility treatments. Central to its benefits is the improvement of blood circulation to the reproductive organs, crucial for optimizing ovarian function and the uterine environment. This enhanced circulatory effect supports egg quality and facilitates successful implantation, critical factors in the success of IVF cycles.

Moreover, fertility yoga contributes to a more balanced internal environment by reducing stress levels and promoting emotional well-being. The practice's emphasis on relaxation and mindfulness helps mitigate the anxiety and tension often experienced during fertility treatments. These psychological benefits are not only vital for the individual's health but also play a significant role in the physiological processes involved in conception.

The scientific community has taken note of these benefits, with studies supporting the positive impact of yoga on fertility treatment outcomes. A notable reference is the research indexed in Pubmed

(<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29112941/>), which highlights the correlation between regular yoga practice and higher success rates in IVF cycles. This body of evidence underscores the tangible outcomes of integrating yoga into fertility treatments, offering a compelling case for its adoption within IVF protocols.

IVF clinics stand to gain significantly by incorporating a wellness component like fertility yoga into their programs. Beyond the direct benefits to patient outcomes, offering such holistic services can enhance the clinic's care model, promoting a more supportive and comprehensive approach to fertility treatments. This integration positions clinics at the forefront of a patient-centred approach, where medical excellence is complemented by practices that nurture the mind and body.

As the field of reproductive medicine continues to embrace the interplay between physical health and emotional well-being, the inclusion of practices like fertility yoga marks a progressive step towards a more holistic and empathetic treatment paradigm. For clinics looking to enrich their offerings and for individuals seeking to optimize their IVF journey, fertility yoga presents a promising path to enhancing both the experience and outcomes of fertility treatments.

**Discover how integrating fertility yoga into your IVF program can transform patient care and outcomes at** (<https://thrivejourney.com/program/yoga-for-ivf/>). Embrace the convergence of medical science and holistic wellness to pave a smoother, more supported path to parenthood.

## Indoor plants can improve well-being

*They can have a positive impact on the mind and beyond*

**P**lants may be your best home decoration option as they not only can make your place cosy but can also provide significant health benefits.

For example, research has found that being around plants can improve blood pressure health. In one study, participants were asked to either repot a plant or do a computer task and then switch roles. Those working with plants reported feeling comfortable and “soothed”, while their blood pressure was reduced. The opposite was true for those completing the computer task.

“Our results suggest that active interaction with indoor plants can reduce physiological and psychological stress compared with mental work. This is accomplished through suppression of sympathetic nervous system activity and diastolic blood pressure and promotion of comfortable, soothed, and natural feelings,” the authors wrote in the *Journal of Physiological Anthropology*. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, so keeping it under control can help prevent heart problems.

This soothing effect from plants was also observed in another study where patients in a hospital waiting room were exposed to real plants, posters of plants, or no nature. The first two groups reported lower levels of stress than patients who weren’t exposed to real or poster plants. The authors concluded that “hospitals

can create a pleasant atmosphere that positively influences patients’ well-being” by simply decorating waiting rooms with real or poster plants.

A research review even found that hospitalised patients who could look at plants or trees experienced better clinical outcomes, such as a reduced need for pain medications and shortened hospital stays.

“Well-designed hospital gardens not only provide restorative and pleasant nature views, but also can reduce stress and improve clinical outcomes through other mechanisms such as increasing access to social support, and providing opportunities for positive escape from stressful clinical settings,” the review authors wrote in the paper *Health Benefits of Gardens in Hospitals*.

Indoor plants have also been found to spark positive emotions, with people in rooms decorated with plants feeling happier than those in plant-free rooms. One Bulgarian study found that students who spent most of their time in their apartments during COVID stay-at-home orders experienced better mental health if they were exposed to more greenery, such as having more houseplants or a garden.

Growing plants may not be everyone’s forte, especially if you don’t have a green thumb, so it’s best to pick plants that are resilient, which will also help keep stress levels down. ■







## Bali Royal Hospital as One of The Best Private Hospitals in Bali

To become an excellent health care centre (Centre of Excellence) with emphasis on customer satisfaction and patient safety are the primary drivers of Bali Royal Hospital's realization.

For decades, Bali has been considered as one of the most popular tourism destinations in the world. With its beautiful natural landscapes scattered around the whole island, the hospitality of the islanders and affordable living costs, Bali managed to deliver unique and memorable experience that makes tourists crave for more. As such, it is paramount for Bali to have necessary services to support livelihood of its inhabitants, especially in medical care. Contributing to the well-being of both locals and tourists; and to become an excellent health care centre (Centre of Excellence) with emphasis on customer satisfaction and patient safety are the primary drivers of Bali Royal Hospital's realization.

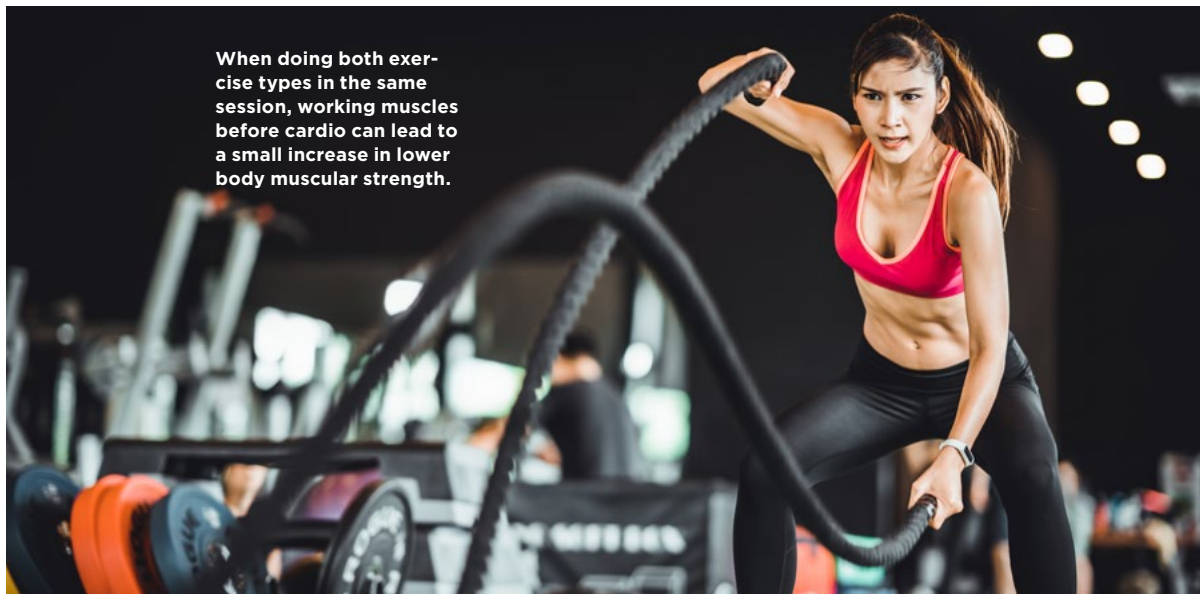
**Bali Royal Hospital (BROS)** was established in 2010, situated in the strategic area of the Renon civic centre which allow easy access to popular tourism area around the island. BROS emphasizes on providing professional services with a touch of Balinese hospitality. The hospital's architecture blends seamlessly with the natural beauty of Bali, creating a serene and welcoming environment for patients seeking medical care. BROS has two superior services (Centre of Excellence), namely the Royal IVF Clinic and Royal Sport Therapy. And has

several specialized services, such as Royal Beauty Clinic, ESWL, Haemodialysis, Vaginal Rejuvenation, Dry Needling, Royal Orthopaedic Service and Fetomaternal Clinic.

**Royal IVF Clinic** is one of the pioneers of IVF services in Bali which is carried out by private hospitals. The team consists of an Obstetric and Gynaecologist, an Andrologist, an Embryologist, a Urologist and an Anaesthesiologist to assist couples with various procedures. With 56,4% success rate in 2023 and positive patient experience, Royal IVF Clinic is highly regarded as a trusted IVF provider in Bali.

**Royal Sport Therapy** is an integrated service which combines physiotherapy under the supervision of an orthopaedic specialist. The programs are designed to address the specific demands of different sports and physical activities whether recovering from a musculoskeletal injury, undergoing post-surgery rehabilitation, or seeking performance enhancement. The excellent services provided include Arthroscopic surgery, Reconstructive surgery, orthopaedic sports medicine, Physiotherapy and Sports Massage.

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When doing both exercise types in the same session, working muscles before cardio can lead to a small increase in lower body muscular strength.

## How to balance cardio and weight lifting

*Both are important in any exercise routine, but their order matters mainly to professionals*

**B**oth cardiovascular exercise that gets the heart rate up and strength-training to work muscles will help you stay fit and healthy, but how do you combine these in the best way and which one do you start with?

“I wouldn’t say it’s cardio versus strength, because they are partners,” Dr NiCole R. Keith, a professor of kinesiology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, told the *New York Times*. “We need to be doing both.”

One study on 416,420 US adults showed that one hour of moderate or vigorous aerobic physical activity (another term for cardio) per week offered significant mortality risk reduction, with bigger decreases occurring when activity went up to three hours weekly. But adding muscle-strengthening exercise to cardio one to two times per week provided additional risk reduction. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends working on major muscles like upper body, lower body, and core. Dr Keith advises to weight lift for three sets of eight to 10 repetitions to reap the health benefits of strength training.

When doing both exercise types in the same session, working muscles before cardio can lead to a small increase in lower body muscular strength, Dr Randal Claytor, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology, Nutrition and Health, at Miami University, wrote in *The Conversation*.

“So if your exercise goals are along the lines of staying generally healthy and enjoying the mental benefits of moving your body, resistance training first might provide a little boost. Research suggests that overall, though, you don’t need to worry too much about which order to focus on – cardio versus weights,”

he added.

The question of how to combine both exercise types does matter for professional athletes, though. Researchers have observed that doing them at the same time may reduce both improvements in aerobic capacity and gains in muscular strength, the so-called interference effect. “It shows up most in well-trained athletes undertaking high volumes of both aerobic and resistance exercise,” he wrote.

Since some athletes have to train both their aerobic and strength abilities, Dr Claytor recommends first doing resistance training or the type of exercise that is more important to achieve your performance goals, while taking a three-hour break between resistance and cardio sessions.

In his lab work, Dr Claytor is researching microcycles of aerobic and resistance exercise, which combine short bursts of both approaches back to back, such as resistance training immediately followed by a few minutes of walking or running for as many times as needed. Preliminary results show that microcycles are as good as doing resistance exercise first in terms of improving aerobic fitness, muscular strength, and lean muscle mass.

“For most people, my current advice remains to choose the order of exercise based on your personal preferences and what will keep you coming back to the gym. High-level athletes can avoid any significant interference effect by doing their resistance routine before the aerobic routine or by separating their aerobic and resistance workouts within a particular day,” he concluded. ■



# Unlocking Hope: The Life-Saving Power of Bone Marrow Transplantation

**Bone marrow transplantation**, or blood stem cell transplantation as is it commonly known now, is one of the amazing medical treatments of the last century. It was first developed in the 1950s, but it has since developed into a transformative life-saving procedure which has been used more than 1.5 million times worldwide!

Bone marrow transplantation is used for the treatment of patients with blood cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and germ cell tumours. It is also utilised for the treatment of patients with non-cancer conditions as well, such as thalassaemia, aplastic anaemia, and in some autoimmune conditions such as multiple sclerosis.

**There are two main types of stem cell transplants. They are autologous and allogeneic stem cell transplants.**

## Autologous Stem Cell Transplantation

The stem cells used for an autologous transplant are collected from the patient's own body. This is sometimes done because intensive chemotherapy or radiation therapy treatment can damage the stem cells and immune system. Therefore, doctors may remove and store stem cells prior to cancer treatment.

After chemotherapy, these stem cells are returned to the body to help build and restore the immune system and body's ability to produce blood cells and fight infection.

## Allogeneic Stem Cell Transplantation

The stem cells used in an allogeneic stem cell transplant are taken from a donor. Allogeneic stem cell transplantation is commonly used for treating aggressive forms of acute leukaemia and myelodysplastic syndromes. It is also used for the treatment of aplastic anaemia, red cell disorders (such as thalassaemia) as well as in some cases of lymphoma and myeloma.

## How do we find a matched donor for allogeneic bone marrow transplantation?

Donors and patients are matched based on their HLA typing (Human Leucocyte Antigen). HLA molecules are present on our white cells, and are important in affecting the degree of rejection between donor and patient. HLA typing is a simple test that is performed on donor and patients using a blood test, or using a cheek swab (rubbing a cotton swab on the inner side of the cheek).



Dr. Lim Zi Yi

In most cases, an ideal donor and patient match is when the HLA typing is 10/10 matched (or 12/12 matched).

## How long are patients admitted for a bone marrow transplantation?

Patients receiving an autologous or allogeneic bone marrow transplantation will require chemotherapy to empty the bone marrow before the stem cells are infused. As patients will have a suppressed immune system, they are usually kept in hospital for a period of 3-4 weeks through the transplant until their immune system starts to recover.

## Centre for Clinical Haematology, Singapore

If you're looking for in-depth information and guidance on bone marrow transplants, we invite you to reach out to us at the Centre for Clinical Haematology, Singapore. Our renowned expert, Dr. Lim Zi Yi, is a leading authority in the field of bone marrow transplants. With years of experience in United Kingdom and Singapore, and a strong track record of successful procedures, Dr. Lim Zi Yi possesses the knowledge and expertise to address your questions and concerns. Whether you're interested in understanding the transplant process, exploring donor options, or discussing potential outcomes, our team, led by Dr. Lim Zi Yi, is here to provide you with comprehensive support. Contact us at the Centre for Clinical Haematology to schedule a consultation and gain valuable insights into bone marrow transplants. Your journey towards improved health starts with us.

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**Bone marrow transplantation is used for the treatment of patients with blood cancers such as leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and germ cell tumours.**

## Beans make you live longer and healthier

*Different bean types are all beneficial*

**B**eans are a nutritional powerhouse associated with a wide range of health benefits, so it's no surprise that they're often a common staple in so-called blue zones, communities where people tend to stay healthy up to or past 100.

Blue zones have been discovered in five areas: Okinawa in Japan, Sardinia in Italy, Nicoya in Costa Rica, Ikaria in Greece, and Loma Linda in the US. People in these communities consume lots of plant foods, with limited intake of meat, sugar, and dairy products.

"In every blue zone I have visited, beans and other legumes were — and still are — a major component of the daily diet," author and entrepreneur Dan Buettner, who has spent decades reporting on these zones, told *CNN*.

Classified as legumes, beans are rich in important nutrients like plant-based proteins, dietary fibres, and minerals.

Replacing animal proteins with those from plants can contribute to lower blood cholesterol levels, reducing the risk for heart problems, while fibres can improve gut health and make you feel full for longer stretches of time, which helps reduce calorie intake.

Beans are also full of antioxidants, substances that help prevent cell damage while fighting diseases and ageing by removing free radicals. These are the chemicals that can damage tissues and contribute to several diseases.

A 2013 medical review found that eating beans could help reduce the risk for coronary heart disease, one of

the most common conditions globally that can prevent the arteries from pumping enough blood to the heart.

Buettner told *CNN* that each bean type has a specific nutritional value, so it's best to eat a variety.

Adzuki beans, for instance, are particularly rich in fibres and folates, the nutrients that studies say can help reduce the risk for chronic diseases. "Folates are a super important B-vitamin for normal cell function, cell growth and metabolism," nutritionist Jenna Appel told *HuffPost*.

Kidney beans are not only loaded with important nutrients like magnesium, manganese, and potassium, but are also highly resistant to digestion in a way that reduces spikes in blood sugars, which can help prevent diabetes or keep it under control.

Another study, from Northeast China, found that black beans could prevent or slow the growth of colorectal cancer cells, making them an ideal component in a diet that aims to prevent or treat cancer.

One potential negative of beans is that they can produce gas in the stomach, but there are ways to keep it under check.

"If you want to avoid gas, the way to start with beans is with a couple tablespoons a day," Buettner said. "Then you go up to four tablespoons and over the course of two weeks you work yourself up to a cup.

Now you're feeding the good bacteria in your gut and your microbiome is ready for it. I have no gas at all from eating beans." ■



Kidney beans are not only loaded with important nutrients like magnesium, manganese, and potassium, but are also highly resistant to digestion in a way that reduces spikes in blood sugars, which can help prevent diabetes or keep it under control.





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## Existing treatment drug could also prevent rheumatoid arthritis

*Early treatment may lead to remarkable improvements against the incurable condition*

**A** medication already in use to treat rheumatoid arthritis (RA) may help prevent the condition in people who are at risk of developing it, a potentially significant breakthrough for a debilitating chronic condition that has no cure.

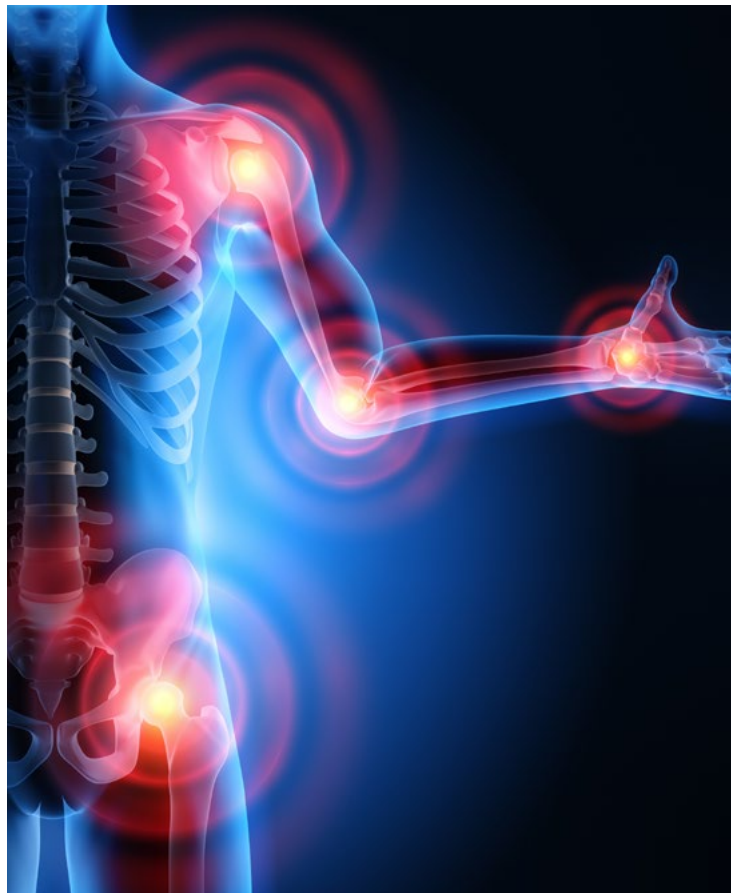
RA is an autoimmune disease where the immune system mistakenly attacks the body, typically causing inflammation in the joints and painful swelling. Though treatment can help manage symptoms, some people can experience painful flares that make it hard to go about daily business.

A team of researchers led by King's College London enrolled 213 patients deemed at risk of RA due to their blood profile and joint pain and randomly treated some of them with weekly abatacept injections while giving the remaining participants a placebo or dummy drug.

The new trial was conducted in the UK and the Netherlands and showed that 92.8 percent of those who received the drug were arthritis-free after 12 months, while the same occurred in only 69.2 percent of the individuals who got a placebo. At 24 months, 25 percent of people in the abatacept group progressed to RA, but the same progression took place in 37 percent of those who weren't treated with the drug. However, after two years, symptoms like pain and inflammation were similar between the two groups, suggesting that the effect of the 12-month treatment is not sustained and people may require it for longer periods.

"This is the largest rheumatoid arthritis prevention trial to date and the first to show that a therapy licensed for use in treating established rheumatoid arthritis is also effective in preventing the onset of disease in people at risk," Professor of Rheumatology, Dr Andrew Cope, from the School of Immunology & Microbial Sciences at King's College said in a press release. "These initial results could be good news for people at risk of arthritis as we show that the drug not only prevents disease onset during the treatment phase but can also ease symptoms such as pain and fatigue."

The trial was particularly effective for Philip Day, a 35-year-old software engineer whose pain affected his daily life to the point where he had to give up playing football, with unpredictable bouts of pain in the knee, elbows, neck, or wrist.



"Enrolling in the trial was a no-brainer; it was a ray of hope at a dark time. Within a few months I had no more aches or pains and five years on I'd say I've been cured. Now I can play football with my three-year-old son and have a normal life," he said in the press release.

People treated with abatacept for one year may, however, experience several side effects, including upper respiratory tract infection, dizziness, nausea, and diarrhoea, but these are usually mild. The yearly cost of treatment is £10,000 (about US\$12,700) in the UK.

Researchers now aim to better identify who's a good candidate for the preventive treatment. "Our next steps are to understand people at risk in more detail so that we can be absolutely sure that those at highest risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis receive the drug."



# Exercise should be recommended as a standard treatment for depression

*It could improve treatment efficacy while providing an additional therapy option for many people*

**R**obust research has shown the effectiveness of physical activity as a treatment against depression, providing more details on the specific interventions that may offer the greatest benefits.

An international team of researchers conducted a meta-analysis of 218 clinical trials that included more than 14,000 participants and found out that walking, running, and strength training, as well as yoga and mixed aerobic exercise, had benefits similar to cognitive behavioural therapy, a common treatment for depression where experts help people change their behaviours and ways of thinking. These physical activities were also better than SSR or so-called antidepressants, which are commonly prescribed in many countries and often used as a standalone approach to depression.

“Antidepressants certainly help some people. And of course, anyone getting treatment for depression should talk to their doctor before changing what they are doing. Still, our evidence shows that if you have depression, you should get a psychologist and an exercise plan, whether or not you’re taking antidepressants,” Dr Michael Noetel, lead study author, wrote in *The Conversation*.

The most impactful approach was to give people a clear programme that could push them to exercise, he added, instead of giving them general advice on the benefits of doing physical activity. “Programs with clear structure worked better, compared with those that gave people lots of freedom. Exercising by yourself might also make it hard to set the bar at the right level, given low self-esteem is a symptom of depression,” he wrote.

The amount of time spent exercising didn’t make a difference, but intensity did. Higher intensity exercises were more effective than lower ones.

While having ups and downs in mood is a normal part of life for most people, depression often involves loss of pleasure or interest in most activities for long periods of time. It can also lead to difficulties at work or school and, in the most severe cases, even to suicide. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that about 280 million people experience depression, but more than 75 percent of people in low- and middle-income countries receive no treatment due to the



lack of services and social stigma associated with psychological problems.

The analysis published this year in the *BMJ* is just the latest in a long list of studies backing up the efficacy of exercise against psychological problems.

A large meta-analysis published last year looked into 1,039 trials with more than 128,000 participants and concluded that physical activity was highly beneficial for improving symptoms of depression, anxiety, and distress in a variety of people, including those diagnosed with so-called mental health disorders or chronic diseases as well as the general population.

Despite such evidence, in some countries exercise is still considered a “backup plan” against depression, wrote Dr Noetel. The American Psychological Association recommends it only as an alternative or complementary approach if talk therapy and drugs are ineffective or unacceptable. The opposite is true in Australia and New Zealand, where psychiatry organisations recommend vigorous aerobic exercise two to three times a week for everyone with depression.

“Given how common depression is, and the number failing to receive care, other countries should follow suit and recommend exercise alongside front-line treatments for depression,” he wrote.

## New drug can reduce life-threatening risk from food allergies in children

*The medication promises to significantly improve prevention against severe allergic reaction caused by common foods*

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently approved a new drug, omalizumab, that can help kids avoid severe allergic reactions triggered by small amounts of food, such as difficulty breathing.

A team of researchers led by scientists at the Stanford School of Medicine enrolled 177 children with at least three food allergies, with skin-prick testing confirming they could experience an allergic reaction to less than 100 milligrams (mg) of peanut protein and less than 300 mg of other foods. They then gave omalizumab injections to two-thirds of them over 16 weeks, while the remaining children received a placebo injection or dummy drug. At the end of treatment, all the children were retested to check their reactions to the foods — 66.9 percent of those who were injected with omalizumab could tolerate at least 600 mg of peanut protein, while only 6.8 percent of the placebo group showed the same tolerance.

“Patients impacted by food allergies face a daily threat of life-threatening reactions due to accidental exposures,” the study’s lead author, Dr Robert Wood, professor of pediatrics at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, said in a press release. “The study showed that omalizumab can be a layer of protection against small, accidental exposures.”

It’s worth noting that 38.4 percent of the participants were children under six, the group at the greatest risk for unknowingly eating small amounts of food they are allergic to.

People with severe allergies are recommended to avoid triggering foods altogether, but common foods that cause allergies, like peanuts, milk, wheat, and eggs, can be found in many things people commonly eat, making it a challenge to safely eat outside, such as in restaurants or other people’s homes.

Until now the best approach to food allergies has been oral immunotherapy, where doctors give patients tiny but increasing food amounts to build tolerance over time. But this can also trigger allergic reactions, takes a long time to succeed, and has to be continued regularly to be effective.

“There is a real need for treatment that goes beyond vigilance and offers choices for our food



allergic patients,” the study’s senior author, Dr Sharon Chinthrajah, associate professor of medicine and pediatrics and the acting director of the Sean N. Parker Center for Allergy and Asthma Research at Stanford Medicine, said in the press release.

While the drug did not lead to significant side effects, some participants experienced minor reactions at the injection sites, so more studies will be needed to better understand the medication’s impact.

“We have a lot of unanswered questions: How long do patients need to take this drug? Have we permanently changed the immune system? What factors predict which people will have the strongest response?” Dr Chinthrajah said. “We don’t know yet.”

Another positive of omalizumab is its efficacy against multiple conditions that are often present along with food allergies, such as asthma, allergic rhinitis, or eczema. “One drug that could improve all of their allergic conditions is exactly what we’re hoping for,” she said.



# Morula IVF Indonesia Receives RTAC International Accreditation, Improving IVF Patients' Trusts

Jakarta, February 2024 - Morula IVF Indonesia, one of the largest fertility clinics in Indonesia, announced that 3 of its branches namely Morula IVF Jakarta which has received RTAC Accreditation since 2016, Morula IVF Surabaya, and Bunda Morula Surabaya have now successfully achieved accreditation from the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee (RTAC) as IVF clinics that have RTAC Accreditation in Indonesia. The accomplishment of obtaining RTAC International Accreditation is a commitment of Morula IVF in providing services.

RTAC is a Council of FSA (Fertility Society of Australia) similar to PERFITRI (Indonesian In Vitro Fertilisation Association), responsible for setting performance standards for ART (Assisted Reproductive Technology) through audited codes of practice and licensing ART practices in Australia. The Fertility Society Of Australia licences the international version of the code of practice for use by certification bodies in countries outside Australia and New Zealand, including Indonesia, to meet these minimum standards covering aspects of safety and quality of care, ethics and law, management and administration, education and training, and research and development.

The Accreditation Assessment is carried out directly by the Accreditation Committee in the field of Assisted Reproductive Technology (Teknologi Reproduksi Berbantu/TRB) which was officiated by the Fertility Society Of Australia (FSA), Mrs Rhonda Williams, as Lead Auditor from Certification Partner Global (CPG) Australia for RTAC Accreditation. This accreditation is given to Morula IVF Indonesia Clinics that have met the requirements to obtain international accreditation from The Reproductive Accreditation Committee (RTAC), namely the Morula IVF Jakarta clinic, Bunda Morula Surabaya and Morula IVF Surabaya. This accreditation process is proof of Morula IVF Indonesia's commitment to providing the best and innovative services in the field of In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF).

After undergoing preparation and a series of assessments from Certification Partner Global (CPG), this international accreditation process is the result of the collective efforts of Morula IVF Indonesia which is dedicated and committed to continuously bringing the latest innovations and complying with international standards in providing safe and effective treatments for couples.

"We are very proud to have successfully achieved RTAC accreditation for three of our branches, this is a proof of our commitment in providing the best IVF services for patients," said Sonny Adi Nugraha as Director of PT Morula IVF Indonesia.

RTAC accreditation is an international recognition of the quality and commitment of Morula IVF Indonesia in providing safe, quality, and ethical IVF services. This also adds to the readers' confidence in Morula IVF Indonesia's reputation as one of the best fertility clinics in Indonesia.



Morula IVF Indonesia branches get RTAC International Accreditation (Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee)

The following are some key facts about Morula IVF Indonesia's success in achieving RTAC Accreditation, including:

- RTAC Accreditation is awarded by the Fertility Society Of Australia (FSA) serving as an independent and trusted accreditation body.
- RTAC accreditation covers aspects of safety and quality of care, ethics and law, management and administration, education and training, and research and development.
- RTAC accreditation is an international recognition of the quality and commitment of Morula IVF Indonesia in providing safe, quality, and ethical IVF services.

With this success, Morula IVF Indonesia further emphasises its position as one of the best fertility clinics in Indonesia. Therefore, Morula IVF is committed to providing quality service, technological innovation, and hope to couples who have difficulty in natural fertilisation.



**morulaivf**  
indonesia

## About PT Morula Indonesia:

Morula IVF Indonesia is part of the Bundamedik Healthcare System which focuses on developing the fertility clinic "Morula IVF" in Indonesia. During its development, in 1997 Bundamedik Healthcare System, established the Morula Fertility Clinic which has now changed its name to Morula IVF Jakarta, has become one of the largest fertility clinics in Indonesia with an increase in patients participating in the IVF programme increasing every year with an average growth of 30% per year.

Realising how high the need for fertility program services that are of good standard and produce good outcomes, Bundamedik Healthcare System is committed to continuing to develop Morula IVF fertility clinics in Indonesia under the management of "Morula IVF Indonesia", which until now has 10 clinics, such as; Morula IVF Jakarta, Morula IVF Ciputat, Morula IVF Tangerang, Morula IVF Margonda, Morula IVF Melinda Bandung, Morula IVF Padang, Morula IVF Pontianak, Morula IVF Yogyakarta, Morula IVF Surabaya and Morula IVF Makassar

## School uniforms may make it harder for young girls to exercise

*International study suggests certain clothes, like skirts, may lead girls to exercise less than boys*

The practise of requiring students to wear uniforms is associated with less time being active, especially among primary school girls, throwing a potential roadblock to enjoyable activities that can make kids significantly healthier.

Researchers from Cambridge University sifted through the physical activity data of more than a million children and teenagers aged five to 17 years and found that students living in countries where most schools require uniforms are less likely to engage in 60 minutes of physical activity per day as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).

In general, fewer girls meet the WHO recommendation than boys, even if uniform requirements are not taken into account, but the gap is wider in countries where most primary school girls have to wear a uniform. The physical activity gap between boys and girls stood at 5.5 percentage points in primary schools of countries where uniforms are not the norm but jumped to 9.8 percentage points in nations where uniforms are common.

The same findings weren't observed among secondary school students. One reason could be that primary school kids tend to do a lot of their daily exercise at school, while older ones have other opportunities to engage in physical activity.

The authors stress that their findings don't prove school uniforms are responsible for reduced physical activity among girls as "causation cannot be inferred." However, previous evidence suggests girls don't feel like engaging in physical activity if they wear skirts or dresses.

"Schools often prefer to use uniforms for various reasons," study leader Dr Mairead Ryan, a researcher at the Faculty of Education and Medical Research Council (MRC) Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge, said in a press release. "We are not trying to suggest a blanket ban on them, but to present new evidence to support decision-making. School communities could consider design, and whether specific characteristics of a uniform might either encourage or restrict any opportunities for physical activity across the day."

Beyond the well-known benefits of reduced

death risk and chronic disease prevention, such as against heart disease, cancer and diabetes, physical activity can also reduce feelings of depression and anxiety while enhancing thinking and learning skills, according to the WHO, which recommends children and adolescents aged five to 17 do an average of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity every day, mostly aerobic exercise.

Considering the importance of regular exercise, the authors of the new study say that more research is needed to understand whether uniforms cause students to engage in fewer physical activities.

"Regular physical activity helps support multiple physical, mental, and well-being needs, as well as academic outcomes," Dr Ryan said. "We now need more information to build on these findings, considering factors like how long students wear their uniforms for after school, whether this varies depending on their background, and how broader gendered clothing norms may impact their activity."







# HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PREVENT INFECTION DISEASE

Let's "Leading Healthy Life" Together!

## Preparing home cook meal

Making home-cooked meals has been proven to enhance the quality of a healthy life since it enables people to plan their menu and become conscious of the quality of the products.



## Practice good personal hygiene

Personal hygiene, such as washing hands frequently, maintaining food hygiene, and keeping the environment clean, is an effective approach to keep someone from getting an infection or disease.



## Stay at home if you are sick

If someone is unwell, it is advisable to stay at home so that others do not contract the virus. Wear the mask, take the medication, and rest comfortably at home. The better you care for yourself, the faster you'll recover.



## Encourage healthy habits

Exercise, workouts, sports activities, and recreation are all examples of healthy habits for physical and mental health that can have a significant impact on our bodies and drive people to live healthy lifestyles and prevent disease.

## Do regular health screening

Health screening can identify early sign of health issues and prevent symptoms from escalating with higher chances of getting the treatment.



**Do not wait until you sick!  
Make sure to do you health screening now at our hospitals.**

KMI Kuantan Medical Centre.  
KMI Taman Desa Medical Centre.  
KMI Kelana Jaya Medical Centre.  
KMI Kuala Terengganu Medical Centre.  
KMI Tawau Medical Centre.

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# Cengild G. I. Medical Centre celebrates a legacy of excellence:

*The Unveiling of the Goh Khean Lee Endoscopy Centre*

In a momentous event on the 8th of January 2024, the Cengild G. I. Medical Centre celebrated a historic occasion as it officially unveiled the renaming of its endoscopy centre. Henceforth, the Cengild G. I. Medical Centre Endoscopy Centre proudly bears the name of the late Emeritus Professor Dato' Dr. Goh Khean Lee – a distinguished scholar, visionary leader, and globally recognized figure in the field of gastroenterology.

Professor Dato' Goh's influence extended far beyond the confines of Malaysia. Serving as the President of the Asia Pacific Association of Gastroenterology (APAGE) and Vice President of the World Gastroenterology Organisation (WGO), he solidified his position as a global authority in gastroenterology. His numerous publications in high-impact journals, fellowships, and memberships in international medical colleges and societies underscore his impact on the field.

His dedication to teaching and mentoring is exemplified by the success of his students, many of whom have become accomplished gastroenterologists. Professor Dato' Goh's work credo – "honesty, hard work, and humility" – reflects his commitment to maintaining the highest standards in clinical medicine.

The renaming of the Cengild Endoscopy Centre is a heartfelt tribute to Professor Dato' Dr. Goh Khean Lee's

enduring legacy. As a founding member and executive director of the center, he played a pivotal role in shaping its identity and excellence.

The Goh Khean Lee Endoscopy Centre, now bearing his name, stands as a testament to Professor Dato' Goh's relentless pursuit of excellence, passion for research, and unwavering dedication to patient care. The centre, once a humble space in the mid-1990s, has evolved into a hub of medical innovation and education under his visionary guidance.

In commemorating the late Emeritus Professor Dato' Dr. Goh Khean Lee, the Goh Khean Lee Endoscopy Centre becomes more than a physical space; it becomes a living tribute to a man whose contributions have elevated Malaysia's standing in the global medical community. The placement of a new plaque signifies not just a renaming but a promise to uphold the standards set by Professor Dato' Goh – standards of excellence, compassion, and continuous learning.

As we move forward with the Goh Khean Lee Endoscopy Centre, we carry with us the wisdom, passion, and dedication instilled by Professor Dato' Goh. May his legacy endure, inspiring future generations of medical professionals to strive for excellence and make a lasting impact on the world of gastroenterology.





CURIE ONCOLOGY

SPRING WILL COME

# Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month



Dr Jenson (seated, middle) and his dedicated team at Curie Oncology KL

“  
*Behind you  
every step  
of the way*  
”

March marks the observance of Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a crucial time dedicated to raising awareness about one of the most prevalent yet preventable and treatable forms of cancer. Preventable through living a healthy lifestyle and regular screening. Treatable with the numerous options; targeted and conventional that are now available as compared to a decade ago. As with most diseases, seeking early treatment at the first signs of unusual bowel activities often translates to a higher possibility of obtaining a cure.

Colorectal cancer may not cause symptoms in its early stages, which underscores the importance of screening. However, as the disease progresses, symptoms may include changes in bowel habits, rectal bleeding or blood in the stool, persistent abdominal discomfort such as cramps or pain, weakness or fatigue, unintended weight loss, and a feeling that the bowel does not empty completely.

The American Cancer Society recommends that individuals at average risk for colorectal cancer begin regular screening at age 45. However, those with increased risk factors may need to start screening at an earlier age and undergo more frequent screenings.

During Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and beyond, individuals can take several actions to support the fight against colorectal cancer:

1. **Screening:** Schedule a screening or encourage loved ones to get screened for colorectal cancer.
2. **Spread Awareness:** Share information about colorectal cancer, its risk factors, symptoms, and screening options with family, friends, and communities.
3. **Lead a Healthy Lifestyle:** Adopt healthy habits such as regular exercise, a balanced diet, avoiding smoking, and moderating alcohol consumption to reduce the risk of colorectal cancer.
4. **Support Research and Advocacy:** Contribute to organizations dedicated to colorectal cancer research, patient support, and advocacy efforts.

Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month serves as a reminder of the importance of early detection, prevention, and advocacy in the fight against colorectal cancer. By raising awareness, promoting screening, and supporting research,

individuals and communities can make strides in reducing the burden of this disease and improving outcomes for those affected by it. Let us unite in spreading awareness and taking action to prevent colorectal cancer and save lives.

Dr Jenson works as a clinical oncologist in Curie Oncology KL at Cengild G.I Medical Centre. He treats solid tumour cancers and have a focused interest in gastrointestinal tumours; oesophageal, stomach, hepatobiliary, pancreas and colorectal. With the landscape of cancers continuously evolving, Dr Jenson's ultimate goal is to increase the patient's chance of a cure. Together with Dr Choo Su Pin, a renowned global expert in gastrointestinal cancer from Curie Oncology Singapore, Curie Oncology KL practises cutting edge science in cancer care ensuring that each patient receives the most appropriate and personalised treatment possible. In Curie Oncology, we believe in a holistic cancer care approach that puts patient dignity as priority. We strive to achieve this with our team of medical professionals and allied healthcare working in tandem to bring the best to every one of our patients.

# We already have the tools to end HIV/AIDS

Scaling up prevention and treatment could stop the spread of the once deadly condition

The global goal is to end AIDS by 2030, a challenging task since we still have no vaccine or cure.

One of the deadliest infectious diseases in history, HIV has claimed the lives of more than 40 million people, but the good news is we now have the ability to eliminate it with the appropriate political and financial support, says UNAIDS, the UN agency in charge of ending AIDS.

“It is not a mystery. It is a choice,” said Winnie Byanyima, the UNAIDS Executive Director, in the report *The Path that Ends AIDS*. “HIV responses succeed when they are anchored in strong political leadership to follow the evidence; to tackle the inequalities holding back progress; to enable communities and civil society organizations in their vital roles in the response; and to ensure sufficient and sustainable funding.”

The global goal is to end AIDS by 2030, a challenging task since we still have no vaccine or cure. But this ambition could turn into reality thanks to the powerful HIV medications that have been developed over the last several decades.

HIV, or human immunodeficiency virus, weakens the immune system, which makes minor infections like the flu or harder-to-treat conditions such as tuberculosis and cancer more difficult to manage and potentially lethal. AIDS, or acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, is the most advanced stage of the infection. Without treatment, HIV progresses to AIDS in about five to 10 years, with people with AIDS on average surviving for about three years. Some of the most common ways of transmission include unprotected sex, contaminated blood donation, and sharing of needles.

When the disease was first identified in the 1980s, there was no clear understanding of how it was making people unwell, let alone any treatment to manage it, exposing patients to several infections and health problems with little hope of surviving.

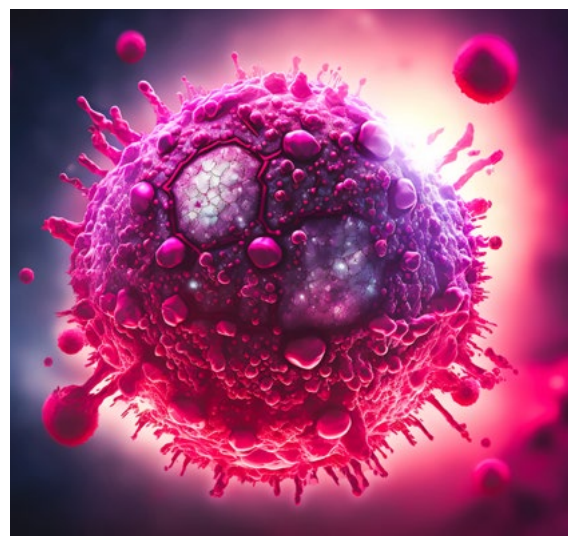
To compound their physical suffering, people living with HIV were forced to bear a social stigma, especially LGBTQ patients. Since many of the first individuals diagnosed with AIDS were men who had sex with men, the condition was sometimes referred

to as the “gay plague” or “gay cancer.” This was partly because AIDS often led to the development of a rare cancer called Kaposi sarcoma. Patients themselves were blamed for getting infected and spreading the disease, a moral failing that led to their sexual promiscuity or a punishment from God. The fear of contagion quickly turned into discrimination.

“HIV-infected kids such as Ryan White were banned from schools; employees were fired simply because they were suspected of having AIDS; police officers in Washington raided a gay bar wearing gloves, face masks and bulletproof vests to protect themselves from what was described then as a ‘lethal threat,’” Steven Petrov wrote in the *Washington Post*.

## Remarkable advancements made, but discrimination persists

The medical community has long established that carriers of the virus can safely socialise and interact with others as the infection can only be spread



HIV, the virus causing AIDS, was identified in the 1980s.







PrEP can reduce the risk of getting HIV from sex by about 99 percent.

Despite the advances, millions of people living with HIV still have little or no access to these potentially lifesaving tests and treatment services, especially in populations at risk of infection.

through bodily fluids such as blood, semen, and vaginal fluids. Anal intercourse is one of the riskiest sexual acts because anal tissue is more likely to break thus facilitating viral transmission. But HIV cannot be transmitted through the air, kisses, hugs, or sharing of food.

Breakthrough combination antiretroviral treatments introduced in the mid-1990s offered great hope for patients, and the new drugs developed since then have been so effective at suppressing the virus that people diagnosed and treated early can live a healthy life without the fear of infecting their partners. The main drawback is that the medications, called antiretroviral drugs (ART), need to be taken for life to ensure the infection stays suppressed.

“The provision of effective treatment has reduced numbers of AIDS-related deaths globally by 51 percent — from 1.3 million in 2010 to 630,000 in 2022. Improved access to treatment has averted an estimated 20.8 million deaths globally,” a UNAIDS report said.

Despite the advances, millions of people living with HIV still have little or no access to these potentially lifesaving tests and treatment services, especially in populations at risk of infection. According to the report, the main barriers to access include user fees, stigma, discrimination, and criminalisation.

A preliminary UNAIDS analysis has suggested that, while in some countries there was a decrease in new infections among sex workers and clients, other groups have not equally benefitted from HIV prevention and treatment. These include gay men, other men who have sex with men, transgender individuals, and, in some cases, intravenous drug users.

Similarly patchy trends can be observed in Malaysia, an upper-middle income economy that epitomises some of the successes and challenges surrounding the treatment of HIV.

In the Southeast Asian nation, HIV was mostly spread through the sharing of drug needles until around a decade ago. Successful prevention programmes managed to dramatically reduce the spread of the disease so that by 2022 about 96 percent of new HIV infections were due to unprotected sex, especially between men who have sex with men.

“In Malaysia, we’ve had successes in changing the trajectory of the drug use epidemic using harm reduction interventions within this population like needle and syringe programmes and by replacing more harmful drugs, like heroin, with less dangerous opioids like methadone,” Dr Raja Iskandar Shah Raja Azwa, infectious disease consultant at University Malaya and president of the Malaysian AIDS Council, told *Global Health Asia-Pacific*.

But the country has seen much less success in tackling the spread of HIV through sexual contact, with stigmatisation and discrimination against the LGBTQ population making it harder to reduce the number of new cases.

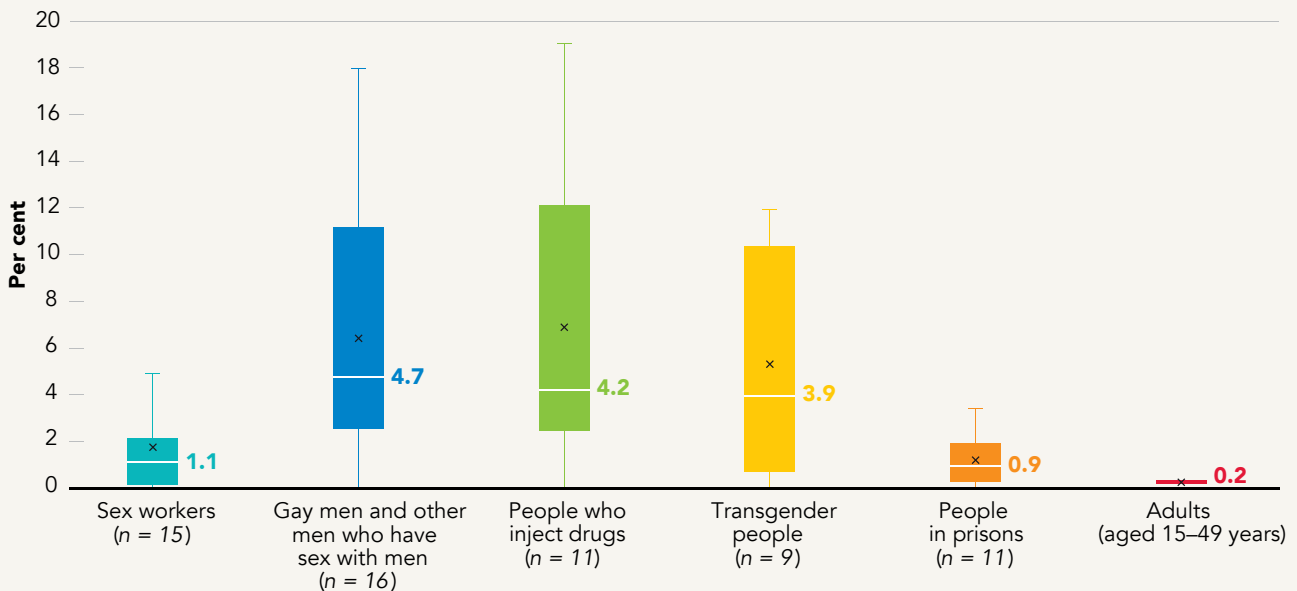
“Gay men and transgender women are very stigmatised in Malaysia, and this prevents such populations from accessing services, meaning that they are not getting tested as frequently as they should, nor accessing prevention treatment. This environment provides an epidemic within that population to flourish,” explained Dr Iskandar.

Malaysia is one of 67 countries that criminalise same-sex relations, according to Human Rights Watch. Punishment includes jail time and whipping. Such risks can make people who engage in anal sex — one of the populations most at risk for HIV — reluctant to come forward for prevention and treatment.

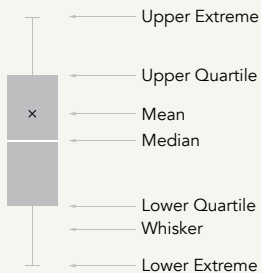
To compound the difficulties in accessing medical services, Malaysian LGBTQ people also report experiencing discrimination from healthcare workers. In what appears to be a typical case, trans activist Rania Zara Medina said that she had heard complaints about medical personnel refusing to touch trans people because of their gender identity, even when seeking care for general health problems. “It is not that they are scared; they do want to go, but they are worried about stigma. Already they’re transgender, what more HIV,” she told *CodeBlue*.



## HIV prevalence among key populations compared with adults (aged 15–49 years), reporting countries in Asia and the Pacific, 2018-2022



### How to read?



The median HIV prevalence among countries that reported these data in Asia Pacific was:

- 1.1% among sex workers.
- 4.7% among gay men and other men who have sex with men.
- 4.2% among people who inject drugs.
- 3.9% among transgender people.
- 0.9% among people in prisons.

The estimated HIV prevalence among adults (aged 15–49 years) is **0.2% [0.2–0.3%]**

Sources: UNAIDS Global AIDS Monitoring, 2023; UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

Notes: n = number of countries. Total number of reporting countries = 42.

The adult prevalence uncertainty bounds define the range within which the true value lies (if it can be measured). Narrow bounds indicate that an estimate is precise, while wide bounds indicate greater uncertainty regarding the estimate.

Similarly, Dr Iskandar said that some healthcare workers were not fully supportive of the free provision of HIV prevention medications implemented in the country's public health facilities, which primarily targets men who have sex with men, because they disagreed with their lifestyle.

But greater access to preventive medicine will be key if the country wants to stop the spread of the disease. Certain antiretroviral medications have been shown to prevent HIV infection if taken before exposure to HIV occurs through sexual contact or drug use. This approach is called pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and can reduce the risk of

getting HIV from sex by about 99 percent and from intravenous drug use by at least 74 percent, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"This is where the judgemental attitudes of healthcare professionals can potentially impede and prevent access to health and life saving medications for people who need it," he said. "The Achilles' heel of all this is stigma and discrimination. In Malaysia, there are laws that criminalise same sex behaviours and sex work, while transgender women feel it's not safe for them to go out as women. So as long as we have those laws in place we are not going to be able to end AIDS."

A similar warning was highlighted last year by then-

Malaysian health minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa who said that new HIV infections in the country had declined at a slower pace between 2010 and 2022 compared to the previous decade. “An average of 3,000 new HIV cases are reported annually, threatening Malaysia’s ability to achieve its commitment to end AIDS by 2030,” she said in a written response to the Malaysian Parliament, as reported by *CodeBlue*.

### Community-led initiatives are the way to go

Empowering communities at risk of or living with HIV to get people to come forward to get tested and offer prevention or treatment is the best approach to tackling stigma and discrimination, thus making it easier to eliminate AIDS, says Dr Iskandar. In his stint as president of the Malaysian AIDS Council, he said he often listened to the concerns of many activists from HIV organisations and the communities they serve.

“The community at risk of HIV, especially men who have sex with men and transgender women, have more confidence and feel most comfortable to go where there are people who look like them and think like them. As a result, community-based organisations are able to test more people at risk of HIV than traditional facilities like primary care clinics or healthcare settings because they have no fear of them being judged or being questioned as to why they want HIV testing,” he explained. He also stressed that organisations that provide HIV services, like NGOs, are often staffed with people living with HIV or at risk of developing it, like men who have sex with men and transgender women.

The success of this approach, he added, was exemplified by Thailand where community-based organisations play a significant role in supporting health professionals with HIV testing and prevention services, while about 80 percent of PrEP is provided by these organisations. Unsurprisingly, the country is also on track to meet some key UNAIDS targets by 2025 — 95 percent of people living with HIV are aware of their diagnosis, 95 percent of those who are aware of their diagnosis are also on HIV treatment, and 95 percent of those on treatment are virally suppressed. These targets are considered instrumental to ending AIDS.

Dr Iskandar would like to see a similar approach implemented in Malaysia but acknowledges the challenges in collaborating with health authorities to replicate it. And yet Malaysia has pursued a different model which has merits in its own right. Launched by the Ministry of Health several years ago, the national Differentiated HIV Service Delivery for Key Populations (DHSKP) programme will allow people from community-based organisations to support health workers in providing HIV services.

“Outreach workers have a visible presence in primary care clinics so that there’s more trust with the doctors while also assisting HIV counselling and

testing,” he said. “That seems to be working so far, but personally I would like to see that pushed further.” He believes that the community should be able to do more than just HIV testing such as dispensing PrEP, while doctors should mostly focus on more complicated HIV cases involving advanced HIV or multiple infections.

Another approach that Dr Iskandar says may be launched soon in Malaysia will allow community pharmacies to dispense HIV self-tests and PrEP so that people who want to access those services don’t have to visit clinics.

“These are just other avenues to look at that because traditional health facilities may exhibit stigmatising or discriminatory behaviours. You really need to think outside the box,” he said.

### We need to update the narrative around HIV

Experts say it’s paramount to raise awareness about the medical progress that has made HIV a treatable disease and the potential to eliminate it with the tools currently at our disposal, as this will also contribute to reducing stigma and discrimination.

“There is a lot of misinformation and misconceptions, a lot that the public has not been updated about advances in HIV treatment,” said Dr Iskandar, adding that many are still unaware that people who take HIV treatment regularly with undetectable HIV viral loads cannot spread the infection sexually to their partners.

He believes it’s crucial to get such a message out because that would make the public less afraid of HIV given that fear and discrimination still linger due to misconceptions about the early epidemic. “A lot of peoples’ understanding of HIV and how it’s transmitted largely stems from the 1980s and

One good example of positive change is the set of guidelines put out by the Malaysian Medical Council that allow HIV positive healthcare professionals on treatment with suppressed HIV viral loads to continue to work, including surgeons.



Currently, we don't have a vaccine against HIV.





It's paramount to empower communities at risk of or living with HIV to come forward to get tested.

1990s. In a lot of peoples' minds, HIV prevention and treatment has not really advanced from that time," he said.

Dr Iskandar cites discriminatory policies in the corporate sector that still require Malaysian workers to be tested for HIV as part of their employment screening. These rules can prevent those who test positive from being employed and are based on past prejudices. But he adds that spreading awareness about HIV among policymakers has led to some improvements. "Sometimes it's not their fault, the message hasn't reached them, but once they get to know about it, they are more receptive to changing policies and making them less discriminatory."

One good example of positive change is the set of guidelines put out by the Malaysian Medical Council that allow HIV positive healthcare professionals on treatment with suppressed HIV viral loads to continue to work, including surgeons.

Another advancement in HIV treatment many people may be unaware of has been the introduction of injectable HIV medication that can be administered every two months to replace the standard regimen of daily pills. Dr Iskandar says this is a significant advancement as it can make treatment more

acceptable, particularly for those with adherence challenges since taking pills every day "can be sometimes a daily reminder to people that they have HIV and this impacts on their mental health and well-being." The injectable medicines are also likely to increase treatment compliance because taking daily pills for life requires a degree of discipline that may be hard to maintain.

All of this progress is part of the evolution in medicine towards HIV elimination, a process unleashed by scientific advancements and the full power of prevention, testing, and treatment. Dr Iskandar sums up the situation this way:

"Despite not having a vaccine or a cure at this stage, we have such good HIV prevention and treatment medication that you can virtually eliminate HIV by scaling up public health initiatives that facilitate diagnosing and treating people with HIV as early as possible, maintaining them on treatment and keeping them virally suppressed, and this is shown by cities like San Francisco and the state of New South Wales in Australia, which have such good public health initiatives that they are on the way to eliminating HIV. We also can eliminate HIV; we just need to scale up all the available tools we have at the moment." ■

# MX CLINIC

Global Health Asia Pacific Award Medical  
Aesthetic Clinic Of The Year 2022/2023

In MX Clinic, we want our clients to experience the latest aesthetic technology and techniques all tailored to their individual goals. Guided by expert hands in a bespoke and caring environment, we want them to be empowered to look and feel their confident best.

Currently with 7 branches in Southern Malaysia within a span of 5 years, we are going on strong in launching new ones real soon.

We are the market leading aesthetic clinics in Malaysia with the latest cutting edge and most advanced technology namely Thermage, Ultherapy, Picosure, Picoway, PicoCare, Potenza, Slyfirm X, CoolSculpting, Elysian Pro, Regenera Activa and Elite IQ.

Our goals are focused on preventing the signs of aging and maintaining the youthful glow by reversing, repairing and restoring the skin to achieve a naturally radiant, healthy looking complexion that stands the test of time. In MX Clinic it has always been a personalised treatment, be it for skin health improvement to facial sculpting, facial lifting and tightening, weight management and holistic approach on wellness.

MX Clinic has been recognized as a multi award winning aesthetic clinic in Malaysia with Neoasia Prophilu Platinum Awards, Allergan Facial Aesthetic Appreciation Award, Rejuran Malaysia No.1, Merz Portfolio Golden Record Award, Malaysia No.1 & Asia Pacific Runner Up and Global Health Asia Pacific Award For The Best Medical Aesthetic Clinic In Malaysia for the year 2022/2023.

We have a reputable team of physicians who are not only well-qualified, but also very experienced in their respective fields. They are supported by a team of dedicated medical professionals from various specialized disciplines. Many of our doctors are trainers and Key Opinion Leaders for Merz Aesthetics, Juvederm and Rejuran.

Contact:

Website: [mxclinic.com.my](http://mxclinic.com.my)

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Address: Head Office. 33-1 Jalan Molek 1/29,  
Taman Molek, 81100 Johor Bahru,  
Johor, Malaysia.

Email: [enquiry@mxclinic.com.my](mailto:enquiry@mxclinic.com.my)



MX CLINIC



The versatile Elite iQ stands out as a dual-wavelength aesthetic platform, empowering practitioners to execute a multitude of sought-after aesthetic treatments.

This cutting-edge device effectively addresses patient needs with its elevated maximum energy, courtesy of its 755nm & 1064nm Nd:YAG technology.

## ELITE Q™- SKIN REJUVENATION ?

The Elite iQ™ 5D Face Rejuvenation revolutionizes skin revitalization by delivering energy to five distinct skin layers. At the deeper levels, it initiates lipolysis, minimizing fat deposits for a sleeker, more contoured appearance. Simultaneously, it induces a photothermal effect, tightening the fascia and triggering collagen production for enhanced skin firmness.

## HOW DOES IT OPERATE ?

Operating closer to the skin surface, the Elite iQ™ 5D Face Rejuvenation boasts advantages such as refining skin texture, reducing redness, fortifying the skin barrier, and bestowing a vibrant, healthy glow.



*Sculpted  
Facial  
Contours*

*Enhanced  
Skin  
Firmness*

*Improved  
Skin  
Texture*

*Reinforced  
Skin  
Barrier*

*Diminished  
Redness*

*Radiant,  
Healthy  
Glow*

# It's best to seek care in accredited clinics and medical centres

*It's a strong sign the highest standards of care are being followed, such as through the new GlobalHealth Quality and Innovation Accreditation*



The best way is to look for a quality hallmark that assures them their choice healthcare provider has instituted processes, procedures, and standards that meet the following criteria and are constantly monitored for improvement.

Choosing the right doctor and hospital can often be a tough call for patients as they struggle with questions of safety, cost, and expertise.

One simple thing to look for is the type of healthcare accreditation your doctor or hospital has. This is a key parameter that can reassure people they're going in the right direction.

Luckily in Asia, we have a number of quality improvement consultation and accreditation services that set the standards for specialist clinics in the region, providing a rigorous framework that guides the delivery of safe, high-quality, and innovative healthcare.

Driven by high rates of economic and population growth, healthcare demand in Asia has been soaring, with many new providers springing up throughout the region to cater to the surging number of patients. As a result of this growth, increased oversight of clinical practices will become a top priority, especially at a juncture when digitised medicine and new technologies are transforming the patient experience and informed patients are now having more say in their

treatment options.

When choosing a healthcare provider, patients are no doubt looking for the best and most trusted. But how do they know if a hospital or specialist clinic deserves their confidence?

The best way is to look for a quality hallmark that assures them their choice healthcare provider has instituted processes, procedures, and standards that meet the following criteria and are constantly monitored for improvement:

- **Meet quality and safety standards:** The provider's service conforms to global standards, best practices, and local regulatory requirements.
- **Responsible staff:** The provider's staff are accountable for the patient's safety and care.
- **Appropriate care:** The provider will respond to the patient's needs with appropriate care to ensure the best possible outcome.
- **Patient collaboration:** The provider will keep the patient informed and involved in their healthcare planning.



- **Data security and privacy:** The patient's healthcare data is secure, and patient privacy is maintained.
- **Patient safety:** The provider places utmost priority on minimising errors and overall patient safety.
- **Safe and effective medication:** Prescribed medication is within guidelines. There is no over- or under-treatment.

With these criteria as a guide, accreditation then can cement trust in medical institutions by facilitating the following goals:

#### Improve patient outcomes

- Strive for error-free healthcare operations with accreditation. It's not just about following processes and meeting standards. It's also about self-examination and continuous improvement.
- Gain access to expert consultation and independent assessments in setting up better structures, implementing standard operating procedures, and streamlining processes, allowing the clinic to minimise variability, mitigate risk, and reduce overall costs.
- These efficiencies translate to greater patient engagement, better treatment, and improved outcomes, strengthening the community's trust in healthcare providers.

#### Innovate for the future

- In today's intelligence age, falling behind in technology adoption can be unforgiving. Accreditation helps members keep up with the transformation of healthcare delivery. Through clear advice and guidance, accreditation inspires and supports efforts to innovate.

#### Having a competent team and confident leadership

- Empowers to improve care delivery. With every employee aligned with the standards, it can boost teamwork, communication, and productivity.
- Staff will take pride in knowing that the organisation is working according to international best practices.

#### Access to resources and expert network

- Steers the practice in the right direction by examining itself against established global standards within an identified clinical specialty. Helps a clinic identify areas of improvement and monitor its progress.
- Benefit from discussions with advanced industry experts and tap into a broader expert network, sharing best practices and forging collaborations with fellow providers.

#### Strengthen recognition and reputation

- Healthcare accreditation helps the clinic communicate information focused on patient safety, quality of care, and commitment to continuous innovations.
- Strengthen the community's trust in providers.



#### A new accreditation player for healthcare providers in Asia

*Global Health Asia-Pacific* has recently launched a parent company that will help medical institutions improve their standards of care by providing quality improvement consultation and accreditation services.

Named GlobalHealth Quality and Innovation Accreditation (GHQIA), the new company is a licensed partner of Australia Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) International and aims to set the standards for healthcare institutions in Asia by providing a rigorous framework to guide the delivery of safe, high-quality, and innovative healthcare in the region.

The company offers hospitals access to the well-established standards of ACHS International and assigns a local partner to offer localised feedback and guidance as well as the option to conduct regular mock assessments of procedures to gear up for the actual audit.

Specialist clinics can benefit from the accreditation programme by tapping into the vast GHQIA member network, a platform that facilitates knowledge and best practices sharing among providers in the region, potentially paving the way for win-win collaborations.

The company also provides accreditation services for centres of excellence, giving providers the chance to get recognised for care quality in niche areas of medicine. GHQIA will apply the ACHS International standards in a focused manner, conducting a deep-dive assessment of the organisation on those selected fronts.



GlobalHealth  
Quality and  
Innovation  
Accreditation  
(GHQIA)



ACHS International  
Accreditation



## Asia. Care. Innovation.

Asia's first quality improvement body to provide accreditation services for hospitals, specialist clinics, and centres of excellence, setting impeccable standards of care in the region with a strong digital and innovative practices.

### GHQIA Quality Improvement Programs



#### Hospital Accreditation

GHQIA provides hospitals access to the well- established standards of ACHS International, with notable added advantages to the accreditation process:

- Assignment of a local partner who can offer accurate, localised feedback and continuous guidance.
- Option to conduct regular mock assessments and readiness diagnostics of processes, procedures, and outcomes to gear up for the actual audit.
- Overall cost-effectiveness through a localised engagement structure.



#### CoE Accreditation

The Centre of Excellence (CoE) Accreditation is a first-to-market initiative allowing GHQIA members to undertake accreditation in niche areas of clinical expertise.

GHQIA will apply the ACHS International standards in a focused manner, conducting a deep-dive assessment of the organisation on those selected fronts.

As part of the excellence requirements and to ensure stand-out achievements in the identified specialty, the organisation is required to participate in the ACHS International Clinical Indicator Program (CIP) to benchmark themselves against best- in-class providers and strive for continuous improvements during the time they are accredited.



#### Clinic Accreditation

With specialist clinics taking on an increasingly critical role in the patient journey, the accreditation serves as a tool to help clinics communicate their commitment to care excellence and differentiate themselves in a saturated market.

Through the accreditation program, members can tap on the expertise of industry experts for advice and guidance on all aspects of clinical operations, including digital health adoption and other innovative healthcare practices.

The GHQIA member network also offers a platform to facilitate knowledge and best practice sharing amongst fellow providers, opening doors to potential creative collaborations.



# Who Should Get Accredited?

Hospitals, Medical Centres, Centres of Excellence, Day Surgery Centres, Chronic Care Facilities, Alternative Care, Imaging and Radiology, Diagnostics and Laboratory, and Specialist Clinics across all spectrums of medical care:

**Aesthetics | Dentistry | Cardiology | ENT | Fertility and IVF | OB-GYN | Gastroenterology  
| Neurology | Oncology | Ophthalmology | Orthopedics | Psychiatrist | Urology ...and more**



Hospitals



Medical Centres



CoE



Specialist Clinics



Day Surgery Centres



Chronic Care Facilities



Alternative Care



Imaging and Radiology



Diagnostic and Laboratory

## ACHS International Accredited Healthcare Institutions



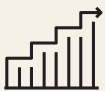
Farrer Park Clinic | Gleneagles Clinic |  
Mount Alvernia Clinic | Mt Elizabeth



HONG NGOC HOSPITAL  
The place to trust

## Why ACHS International?

With our strong focus on partnership, ACHS International is unique in our approach to quality improvement and offer the following benefits to our member organisations:



### Continuous quality improvement offers methodology

Evaluating your service and constantly improving your performance.



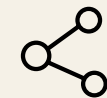
### More Descriptive, Less Prescriptive

Standards include descriptive guidance with the flexibility to implement based on service needs.



### Value for Money

Pricing includes all membership benefits and support services to be paid in instalments over the membership period.



### More Connection

Our quality programs have an annual activity to maintain connection with you on your quality improvement journey.



### Clinical Indicator Program

Complimentary access to the world's largest clinical indicator program (CIP) and data benchmarking.



### Flexible & Collaborative

There are multiple models such as Short Notice and Cluster accreditation to meet your organisational needs.



### Leading Customer Service

Complimentary access to a Coach, Quality Improvement Partner, Member Link organisation, and a comprehensive Member Portal.



### Contextualised & Localised

Our resources and standards include local guides and a growing international assessor cohort.



### Sustainable Improvements

Standards focus on safety culture and change management to make long lasting improvements within your organisation.



### More Options for More Organisations

Our quality programs are designed for all types of organisations based on their readiness in the quality journey.

# Healthy eating is the most impactful choice we can make

I demystify subjects such as the importance of dietary fibre and the true nature of sugars and provide overviews of common conditions like gout and fatty liver disease.

**M**any people are aware that lifestyles play a big role in health and disease, providing a strong incentive to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Nowhere are our choices more impactful than in the food we eat, but the flood of online information on clean eating makes it challenging to make educated choices. We sat down with Dr EE Zhang, physician, author, and healthy lifestyle advocate, for expert guidance on how to lead a healthy lifestyle. After graduating with a medical degree, Dr EE decided to apply her experience to promoting health literacy and education. What drives her professionally is helping people navigate the complexities of health science.

**Q: What are the health education activities you participate in?**

A: I spend much time doing short talks or seminars covering various health topics. I demystify subjects such as the importance of dietary fibre and the true nature of sugars and provide overviews of common conditions like gout and fatty liver disease. In an era rife with misinformation, I also address and debunk myths circulating in the media, such as the efficacy of placental extracts and live cell therapy. I try my best to make it entertaining and accessible for the general public and to present complex concepts in a manner that is easy to understand, empowering people to apply this knowledge to their daily lives.

**Q: Your book, *Educate Act Thrive: EAT for the Immune System*, focuses on the positive impact healthy diets can have on the immune system and our overall health. Why did you investigate the relationship between food and the immune system in particular, considering that things like exercise or the environment can also have a positive impact on health?**

A: For many of us, our most constant and intimate relationship is not with another person but with food. It extends beyond mere sustenance and serves up joys and unique sensory delights. However, the relationship is double-edged—food can be a source of immense

pleasure and a source of shame. We truly are what we eat, so we must choose wisely.

While exercise undeniably contributes to our well-being, its role is secondary to the influence of diet. As the saying goes, we cannot outrun a bad diet. Exercise helps but cannot compensate for poor nutritional choices. For example, physical activity helps protect our heart, but its ability to counteract the detriments of a poor diet is limited. Without a wholesome diet, the heart cannot reap the full benefits of exercise, regardless of the intensity or frequency.

Our environment presents variables often beyond our control—from pollution, exposure to chemicals, and the climate to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. We can minimise these risks, but we cannot eliminate them. In contrast, our diet is wholly within our control. We should channel most of our energy towards aspects of our health that we can directly influence.

What we eat is a conscious choice we make for ourselves multiple times every single day. Proper nutrition is the bedrock upon which our immune health



Dr EE Zhang





**There are no miracle food supplements to make our diet healthy.**

is built. Despite the allure of “miracle” supplements on the market, the most effective strategy is simple: a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, minimal consumption of animal products, adequate rest, and regular exercise, topped off with a big smile. We do not need to chase after some mysterious, exotic, or expensive formula. It is as easy as going to the supermarket and picking up some greens.

**Q: You wrote that good nutrition can help prevent autoimmune diseases, ward off allergies, and reduce the risk of cancer while protecting against infectious diseases. Can you explain how healthy diets can help prevent or reduce the risk for these conditions? Is this mostly due to the strengthening of the immune system?**

**A:** Understanding the intricate relationship between nutrition and disease prevention is pivotal. Heart

disease and cancer, the two leading causes of death worldwide, can often be prevented with a good diet. While a robust immune system is a significant benefit of a healthy diet, the scope of a healthy diet’s impact is far-reaching. Cancer is a complicated multifactorial disease, but we know it is undeniably linked to obesity. Obesity is a condition heavily influenced by our dietary choices. A poor diet can be a fast track to obesity, increasing the risk of cancer.

The link between diet and autoimmune diseases or allergies is also complex. Both autoimmune diseases and allergies are marked by immune dysregulation, where a poor diet may exacerbate inflammation and aggravate the symptoms of the diseases. An unhealthy diet can trigger chronic low-grade inflammation throughout the body—often a silent harbinger of chronic disease. This type of inflammation does not cause any symptoms but, over time, puts increased



Regular exercise is another important component of a healthy lifestyle.

## Medicine cannot cure everything.

stress on all the organs and tissues in the body, causing long-term damage. Similarly, diets high in processed and inflammatory foods (such as red meat) can exacerbate the symptoms of allergic diseases.

Conversely, a healthy diet can be a potent ally. For example, individuals with rheumatoid arthritis, an autoimmune disease, have shown symptom improvement when consuming a diet rich in fibre and phytochemicals, such as eating more leafy greens. Nutritious foods can be instrumental in managing autoimmune diseases and allergies.

Medicine cannot cure everything. The limitations of medicine are evident in the management of chronic conditions, like autoimmune diseases and allergies, where treatments primarily aim to manage symptoms. While necessary to control autoimmune diseases, these treatments, such as immune-suppressing drugs, increase the risk of infections, cancers, and other diseases.

We also cannot cure more common illnesses like the cold or the flu. We can take medication to feel better, but ultimately, our recovery relies on the strength of our immune system—a force that is nurtured and empowered by our dietary habits. If our immune system is not up to par, it does not matter what doctors do; we will be in deep trouble. Currently, no medication can substitute for the immune-boosting potential of a healthy diet. Our diet is the unsung hero in the narrative of health, the cornerstone upon which our body's defenses are built and sustained. Through mindful nutrition, we can harness the power of our immune

system to lead a life not just of greater duration, but of superior quality—a life lived to its fullest.

## Q: Can you talk about your health routine and explain why you chose it to stay healthy?

A: My daily routine is simple, and I owe much of its success to my dog's love for structure, a sentiment I have come to share wholeheartedly. I try to get a whole night's rest and maintain a consistent sleep schedule, going to sleep and waking up at the same time every day. I start my mornings by taking my dog out for a brisk walk or jog, and then we both eat a breakfast full of fruits. (Yes, she gets some fruits too!) It is a refreshing start and sets a tone of wellness for the day. I have invested an hour exercising and eating well, and I do not want to let that go to waste, so I am motivated to continue making healthy choices throughout the day.

I also go to the gym several days a week to do weight training, which is great for my muscles and bones. In the evening, my dog and I go for another long walk. She keeps me on my feet, and the constant activity reinforces my commitment to eating well and maintaining my health regimen.

## Q: Many people often struggle to maintain a healthy diet for the long term. What is your advice on having a healthy diet on a daily basis while still enjoying food?

A: A healthy diet is less about the food and more about cultivating a lifestyle. The allure of fad diets is strong, with their promises of quick fixes and miraculous results, but true health is not a one-size-fits-all formula. The real challenge is not fighting off hunger or counting every calorie. It is the self-introspection required to initiate honest change. True health is a personal journey, not a preset destination.

People falter with their diets because they do not enjoy them. They become trapped in a cycle of starting, stopping, and restarting diets. Think about those New Year's resolutions—how many are actually kept? It is time to remove our rose-tinted glasses and confront the truth.

It is uncomfortable to see ourselves as lacking the conviction or self-control for a healthy diet. And you know what? That is okay. There is profound freedom in acknowledging our flaws. Being honest means admitting our struggles, whether snacking less or exercising more. Then, we can begin the next step—setting realistic goals.

A healthy diet's essence is its longevity. While some people can switch from a carnivore fast-food diet to a herbivore vegan diet overnight, for most of us, such drastic changes are not sustainable. Transitioning from fried to baked chicken, from regular to baked fries, and eventually embracing vegetables like





Eating healthy is as simple as consuming lots of vegetables on a regular basis.

Brussels sprouts, mushrooms, or grilled asparagus is a path of small yet powerful steps that lead to enduring habits. These incremental steps are the building blocks of a long-lasting change.

Being honest also means confronting our limitations. For example, why are not we eating healthy every day? Is it because our lunch options at work are not the healthiest? Or is it because we pass on the healthy choice in favour of something yummy to alleviate stress? We need to create strategies that align with our realities and navigate our constraints.

Lasting health is about gradual, maintainable change. A healthy diet is intrinsically personal and diverse in its expression. It looks different for everyone. It is up to us to introspect, evaluate, and tailor a path that not only sustains us but also brings joy and fulfilment to our everyday lives.

**Q: Despite making efforts to eat healthily, many people will still eat unhealthy foods for various reasons. What is an optimal balance between healthy and unhealthy foods? Is having a cheat day per week good advice?**

A: Let us reframe how we view dietary indulgences. Labeling them as “cheating” casts a negative

shadow over the joy of eating, exacerbating a culture already fraught with diet-related guilt and anxiety. It is healthier and more productive to recognise that occasional treats are a natural part of life’s pleasures. A diet does not always have to be perfect, and there is no shame in that.

Proper balance in a diet is not about rigid perfection; it is about establishing a consistent pattern of healthy choices. An occasional day of indulgence will not compromise an overall nutritious lifestyle. When these instances become frequent, tipping the scales towards unhealthy foods, it is time to reassess and readjust. A healthy diet is an ongoing narrative rather than a daily account.

Instead of assigning a specific “cheat day”, it is more beneficial to cultivate a sustainable approach where the majority of dietary choices are wholesome and nourishing. This perspective allows for flexibility and enjoyment, ensuring that the journey towards health is pleasurable and devoid of guilt. By focusing on the overarching trend of our eating habits, we can forge a relationship with food that is both satisfying and healthy. It is the sum of our dietary choices that shape our well-being, not the occasional divergence from the ideal. ■



# Elevating Beauty Beyond Boundaries: The Essence of Klinik Dr Inder



In a realm where wellness intertwines with the artistry of aesthetics, Klinik Dr Inder stands as a beacon of innovation and excellence. Founded by the visionary Datuk Dr Inder, our clinic redefines conventional beauty standards, offering a sanctuary where transformative treatments merge seamlessly with personalized care.

Breaking away from the traditional confines of medical practice, Datuk Dr Inder embarked on a quest to manifest her passion for wellness, aesthetic medicine, and hair transplantation. With an unwavering commitment to perfection, she established Klinik Dr Inder, where patient satisfaction reigns supreme.

Our mantra is simple yet profound: to transcend mere medical interventions and elevate treatments to the realm of artistic mastery. At Klinik Dr Inder, we view every procedure as a canvas, meticulously crafted with the latest technology, skilled hands, and a touch of creativity.

Our team comprises experts in their respective fields, each imbued with a passion for enhancing beauty and restoring confidence. We understand that true beauty is not confined to external appearances; it emanates from within. Hence, we adopt a holistic approach, nurturing both body and soul.

Introducing our signature series of treatments: iPlus®. More than just a collection of procedures, iPlus® embodies our commitment to excellence and innovation. Each iPlus® treatment is tailored to the individual, harnessing the power of customization to deliver unparalleled results.

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# Social media continues to censor women's health posts as pornography – and it may cause serious harm

Author: Fiona Woollard, Professor of Philosophy, University of Southampton

This article was published in The Conversation in March 2024 <https://theconversation.com/social-media-continues-to-censor-womens-health-posts-as-pornography-and-it-may-cause-serious-harm-224200>

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Women's bodies are often perceived as sexual, regardless of circumstances.

**W**hat's the difference between men's nipples and women's? How about men's pubic hair and women's?

Well, on social media, at least, the difference seems to be that women's nipples and pubic hair are considered pornographic and subject to censorship – no matter what the context. Even if it's a social media post about health issues, such as periods and breast cancer.

Over the last few years, there have been numerous reports of censorship of women's posts about issues from sexual health to breastfeeding and cesarean sections.

This is sad, but not surprising: women's bodies are often perceived as sexual, regardless of circumstances.

## Breast campaigns classified as porn

There's something particularly shocking about treating a breast cancer awareness campaign as pornography. Think about how the woman sees her breast in that moment. She is worried that she may have a life threatening disease. She is concerned about her health.

The labelling her image as pornography overrides the woman's own view of her body and replaces it with an outsider's view. It treats her body as an object for the sexual pleasure of the viewer. Feminists call this sexual objectification.

In the case of the breast cancer awareness campaign, the clash between the woman's perspective of her body and pornography classification is stark. This makes it easier to see





what is going wrong.

Sometimes it can be more difficult to recognise objectification.

Consider, for instance, the improvement in attitudes towards breastfeeding in public.

In a 2015 Start for Life poll, 72% of people said they supported breastfeeding in public.

Nonetheless, some people still see breastfeeding as sexual and research from 2022 shows that this perception continues to deter some mothers from breastfeeding in public. Again, this involves prioritising how a viewer may see women’s bodies over the woman’s own attitudes and aims.

However, as social media censorship shows, there’s still significant stigma around women’s bodies – and it’s harmful.

Researchers have explored the effects of objectification on women’s mental health. Studies have found that women may begin to view their own bodies primarily as objects for the use of others, and to see themselves as failures if they do not match up to whatever is currently regarded as the “ideal” body shape. Common effects include shame, anxiety, depression, disordered eating and reduced productivity.

### ‘Vagina’ and ‘vulva’ are dirty words

This view that women’s bodies are sexual regardless of context is so dominant that the algorithm does not recognise alternative reasons for talking about or showing women’s bodies. The algorithm does not recognise that content about women’s bodies may be aimed at women. Women thus lose out on the opportunity to talk about their own bodies or to find out information about their bodies.

In 2023, a campaign from period products brand

Bodyform was muted by social media for “sexual content”.

The campaign didn’t feature any nakedness but did include the correct anatomical terms for women’s body parts, including “vagina” and “vulva”. In response to being shadow-banned, the brand went on to highlight a list of forty words relating to women’s health that are regularly censored on social media – the list includes “clitoris”, “discharge”, “menopause”, “miscarriage” and “polycystic ovary syndrome”.

In 2022, the Center for Intimacy Justice studied 60 women’s health companies and found all of their ads were rejected on both Meta and Instagram over the previous three years, with almost half of those companies having their accounts suspended during the period. But in several instances, the ad policies only penalised content related to women and nonbinary people’s sexual health, while men’s sexual wellness brands were approved.

Philosopher Kate Manne argues that even when we push back against the shame many women feel about their bodies, we often end up unintentionally entrenching the idea that women’s body exist for others.

Body positivity is the idea that you should see your body as beautiful no matter what shape it is. Body neutrality suggests that we should aim to feel neutral about how our bodies look. Manne offers instead body reflexivity: my body is for me, and my perspective on it is the only one that matters.

It may seem obvious that my body is for me. But women grow up being told in so many subtle ways that there body is primary an object for others. Against that background, body reflexivity is a radical idea. ■

**Body positivity is the idea that you should see your body as beautiful no matter what shape it is.**

# Being excluded or truant from school leads to mental health problems – and vice versa

Author: Aase Villadsen, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Education, UCL

This article was published in *The Conversation* in February 2024 <https://theconversation.com/being-excluded-or-truant-from-school-leads-to-mental-health-problems-and-vice-versa-222194>

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In the aftermath of the pandemic there has been a substantial increase in the number of students who are absent from school in the UK, and children are reporting higher levels of mental ill health than ever before.

Research has previously shown that exclusion (a child being removed from school) and truancy are linked with poor mental health.

Now, I have carried out research with colleagues to examine whether mental health leads to exclusion and truancy, or whether exclusion and truancy are in fact contributing to poor mental health in children and adolescents.

We found that the connection goes both ways. Children who struggled with their mental health were more likely to later be excluded from school and to truant. And we also found evidence that exclusion and truancy could increase their mental health difficulties.

## A vicious cycle

Missing out on school is detrimental not only to children's educational achievement but also to their wellbeing and overall development. These children miss out on important formative interactions with their peers and teachers.

Being excluded from school can have a long-term – even life-long – impact. Research suggests that children who have been excluded are more likely to be unemployed and to go to prison, as well as to have mental health difficulties.

In our study we used nationally representative data from more than 15,000 children born in the UK between 2000 and 2002. The survey collected extensive information on participants during their childhood and teenage years, including information on behavioural problems, such as aggressive behaviour, and emotional problems involving symptoms of



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anxiety and depression. It also included information on children's experience of school exclusion and truancy.

Our analyses revealed that mental health difficulties in primary school left children more vulnerable to exclusion and truancy later when entering secondary school. More specifically, increases in emotional problems heightened a child's chances of being excluded in their early adolescent years, and their chances of being truant from school.

Primary school children with worsening behavioural problems were also more at risk of being excluded when they reached secondary school. But, we found no evidence that behavioural problems increased children's probability of truancy.

In our study, we also discovered that truancy and exclusion may in turn be exacerbating mental health problems. We showed that some of these detrimental effects differed according to the child's gender. And while some affected mental health only in the short-term, others had a longer lasting impact.

For example, boys – but not girls – who had been excluded in secondary school went on to have higher levels of depression and anxiety, with effects lasting even into late adolescence after they had left school. Both boys and girls who had been excluded also went on to have worse behavioural problems in early adolescence but not later in adolescence. Truants went on to have greater long-term emotional problems, and short-term their conduct problems were also higher.

### **Changing the pattern**

Our study very clearly demonstrates a cycle of disadvantage, where children who were struggling with their mental health went on to be truant or be

excluded, but at the same time truancy and being excluded further exacerbated their problems, sometimes into late adolescence.

This new knowledge emphasises the need for prevention and intervention for child mental health problems. This could reduce the number of vulnerable children missing out on educational opportunities and also reduce further damage to their mental health.

School-based social and emotional learning programmes may have an important role to play as these have shown success in reducing both behavioural and emotional problems. Sports-based programmes may be another promising avenue for keeping children connected to school. More awareness of child mental health is also vital, even as young as primary school age. Many children may slip through the net: they need better and early access to mental health services.

It is interesting that school exclusion was found to increase emotional symptoms in boys, but not in girls, in both early and late adolescence. These symptoms generally increase much more in girls during this developmental period. Additional focus might be needed on finding alternatives to excluding boys from school.

It is particularly poignant that despite behavioural problems not leading to truancy, these types of problems increased following truancy. Children's bond with their school seems key to reversing this trend.

Programmes that focus on transforming the school environment by developing student commitment to learning and creating a sense of belonging in the school, as these can reduce truancy, could make a significant difference here. And later mental health problems may also be avoided. ■



# Navigating the Future of Genetic Testing in Reproductive Medicine: PGT-M and PGT-A

By Aaron Chen, Scientific Director of Sunfert@BangsarSouth



By providing valuable genetic information about embryos before implantation, these tests help couples make informed decisions about their reproductive options.

In the realm of reproductive medicine, genetic testing has emerged as a powerful tool, offering insights into potential genetic abnormalities in embryos before implantation. Preimplantation Genetic Testing for Monogenic Disorders (PGT-M) and Aneuploidy (PGT-A) are two such technologies revolutionizing the landscape of assisted reproductive techniques. Let's delve into what they entail and how they are shaping the future of family planning.

PGT-M, also known as PGD (Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis), targets single gene disorders, which are caused by mutations in a single gene such as, but not limited to thalassaemia, cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anaemia, muscular dystrophy, hearing loss, inheritable cancer gene etc. PGT-M involves extracting a few cells from an embryo created through in vitro fertilization (IVF) and analysing them to detect specific genetic mutations. This process allows prospective parents who carry a genetic disorder to screen embryos and select those free of the targeted mutation for implantation, thus reducing the risk of passing on the disorder to their offspring.

On the other hand, PGT-A focuses on screening embryos for aneuploidy, which refers to an abnormal number of chromosomes. Aneuploidy is a common cause of failed implantation, miscarriage, and chromosomal disorders such as Down syndrome and Turner syndrome. PGT-A analyses the chromosomal makeup of embryos to identify those with the correct number of chromosomes, enhancing the chances of successful implantation and reducing the likelihood of miscarriage.

Both PGT-M and PGT-A offer significant benefits to couples undergoing fertility treatments. By providing valuable genetic information about embryos before implantation, these tests help couples make informed decisions about their reproductive options. For couples

at risk of passing on hereditary diseases, PGT-M offers the possibility of having a healthy child while minimizing the risk of genetic disorders. Similarly, PGT-A improves the likelihood of successful IVF outcomes by selecting embryos with the best genetic potential for implantation.

However, it's essential to recognize that PGT-M and PGT-A are not without limitations and ethical considerations. The accuracy of these tests relies on the quality of the embryo biopsy and the expertise of the laboratory performing the analysis. Additionally, PGT-A has faced criticism regarding its efficacy in improving live birth rates.

Furthermore, the cost of PGT-M and PGT-A can be prohibitive for many couples, making access to these technologies a privilege rather than a universal option. Ethical dilemmas also arise concerning the selection and potential discarding of embryos based on genetic criteria, raising questions about the implications for societal values and the concept of "designer babies."

As with any medical intervention, the decision to undergo PGT-M or PGT-A should be made in consultation with healthcare professionals who can provide comprehensive information, guidance, and support. While these technologies offer promising advancements in reproductive medicine, it's crucial to approach them with careful consideration of the ethical, social, and emotional implications involved.

In conclusion, PGT-M and PGT-A represent groundbreaking advancements in reproductive genetics, offering couples the opportunity to screen embryos for genetic disorders and chromosomal abnormalities before implantation. While these technologies hold great promise for improving IVF outcomes and preventing hereditary diseases, they also raise important ethical and societal considerations that warrant ongoing dialogue and ethical reflection within the medical community and society at large. ■



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# Egg Freezing: Empowering Choices and Medical Considerations

By Dr Lim Lei Jun, Fertility Specialist Sunfert@Bangsar South

In the rapidly evolving landscape of reproductive medicine, egg freezing has emerged as a pivotal technology, offering individuals greater control over their fertility timelines. This revolutionary procedure not only provides hope for those facing medical treatments that may compromise fertility but also offers a viable option for individuals wishing to delay childbearing for personal or professional reasons.

For medical professionals, understanding the intricacies of egg freezing is paramount in advising and co-managing patients considering this option. Firstly, it's crucial to educate patients on the process itself. Egg freezing involves stimulating the ovaries with hormone injections to produce multiple eggs, which are then retrieved through a minimal invasive surgery procedure. These eggs are subsequently frozen and stored for future use. Providing patients with comprehensive information about the procedure, its success rates, and potential risks empowers them to make informed decisions about their fertility.

Moreover, medical professionals must assess each patient's unique circumstances and reasons for considering egg freezing. For individuals undergoing medical treatments such as chemotherapy or radiation, egg freezing offers a chance to preserve their fertility before embarking on therapies that may impact ovarian function. By discussing the timing of egg freezing in relation to their treatment plan, healthcare providers can help patients navigate this aspect of their healthcare journey with greater confidence and clarity.

Furthermore, for working adults contemplating egg freezing for personal or career-related reasons, medical professionals play a crucial role in providing guidance and support. Understanding the potential implications of age on fertility and the optimal timing for egg freezing is essential in helping individuals make informed decisions about their reproductive futures. By addressing concerns and offering personalized recommendations, healthcare providers can assist patients in navigating the complexities of family planning in the modern world.

For working adults seeking medical information on egg freezing, it's essential to grasp the key considerations and factors involved. Firstly, egg freezing is most successful when performed at a younger age, typically in one's 20s or early 30s, as egg quality and quantity decline with age. However, advancements in egg freezing techniques have improved success rates even for individuals in their late 30s and early 40s.

Additionally, understanding the costs associated with egg freezing is crucial for individuals considering this option. Expenses for medication, egg retrieval, and storage fees can vary, and it's essential to weigh these financial considerations when making decisions about

fertility preservation.

In conclusion, egg freezing represents a transformative advancement in reproductive medicine, offering individuals greater autonomy over their fertility journeys. Medical professionals play a pivotal role in educating and guiding patients through the process, while working adults benefit from access to accurate medical information to make informed decisions about their reproductive futures. By fostering open dialogue and providing comprehensive support, we can empower individuals to make choices that align with their values, goals, and aspirations. ■

**Egg freezing is most successful when performed at a younger age, typically in one's 20s or early 30s**



# How to Successfully Scale Generative AI in Pharma

Go beyond the “what” of experimentation to the “how” of setting an organization-wide scaling strategy.

The generative artificial intelligence (AI) transformation is well underway in pharma. And pharma companies have high confidence in its value: Already, 40% of executives say that they are baking expected savings into their 2024 budget (see Figure 1), and 60% have set targets for cost savings or productivity boosts, according to a recent Bain survey.

Nearly 60% of executives say that they have moved beyond ideation and brainstorming to building out use cases. In fact, 55% reported that they expected to have multiple proof-of-concept or minimum viable product builds by the end of 2023.

With companies large and small making significant headway in realizing the benefits of generative AI, what will separate the best from the rest? Over the next three to six months, the companies that make the greatest progress will be the ones that move from isolated pilots to scaling winning use cases across the board. These leaders will pull away from the pack with an operating model that supports fast growth at scale and prioritizes the most valuable opportunities.

## The state of AI in pharma

Classical data science and machine learning are nothing new to pharma executives who have been investing in productivity enhancements for years, primarily in the drug discovery space. Bain research shows that 54% of pharma companies have automated biomedical literature review solutions, and 46% are using AI as part of their process to find potential disease targets.

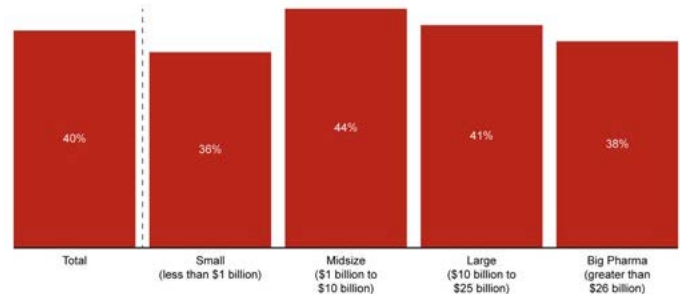
Now, generative AI is broadening the aperture of use cases with new opportunities across the value chain. Biomedical literature review and preclinical research remain among the most popular use case areas, although we’re also seeing high investment in IT and competitive intelligence (see Figure 2). Within these top areas, more than 60% of executives, on average, say that they have at least a proof of concept in development, and around 10% have already rolled out tools.

These early adopters have moved swiftly, often reaching a working pilot within about eight weeks. And already, many are seeing tangible value.

For example, within six weeks, one healthcare leader was able to develop a working pilot of an AI-enabled chatbot to help answer pharma reps’ medical questions on a subset of its products. It significantly boosted contact center agent productivity by improving the number of issue resolutions per hour. Similarly, Eli Lilly estimates that it has saved around 1.4 million hours of rote human activity since 2022 through automation and technology. With further AI investments, it aims to reach 2.4 million hours by the end of the year.

Other leading pharma companies have made rapid gains in a range of areas, from research and development to support functions. One created an accurate model for clinical trial patient identification in a quarter of the time needed for previous machine learning models. Several have succeeded with generative AI tools that draft summaries of regulatory filing content or responses to regulator questions. Others have focused on chatbots for knowledge management, enabling employees to quickly query internal documents.

**Percentage of executives who say that savings from generative artificial intelligence are being incorporated into 2024 budgets**



Some have pursued commercial endeavors: For instance, companies are already piloting generative AI to streamline salesforce tasks, including dynamic content generation, and one company is using AI to draft custom ad copy according to US Food and Drug Administration guidelines.

The level, speed, and success of subscale experimentation has been impressive. But as early wins breed interest and energy across the organization, it’s increasingly critical for executives to shift from disconnected pockets of generative AI experimentation to an enterprise-wide program. Otherwise, the organization can trip over itself, becoming the bottleneck to its own potential.

Industry pioneers haven’t just built two to three proofs of concept. They have scaled those proofs of concept and encouraged adoption. They have also created thoughtfully structured backlogs with use cases throughout the company prioritized by how much value they bring and how practical they are to develop.

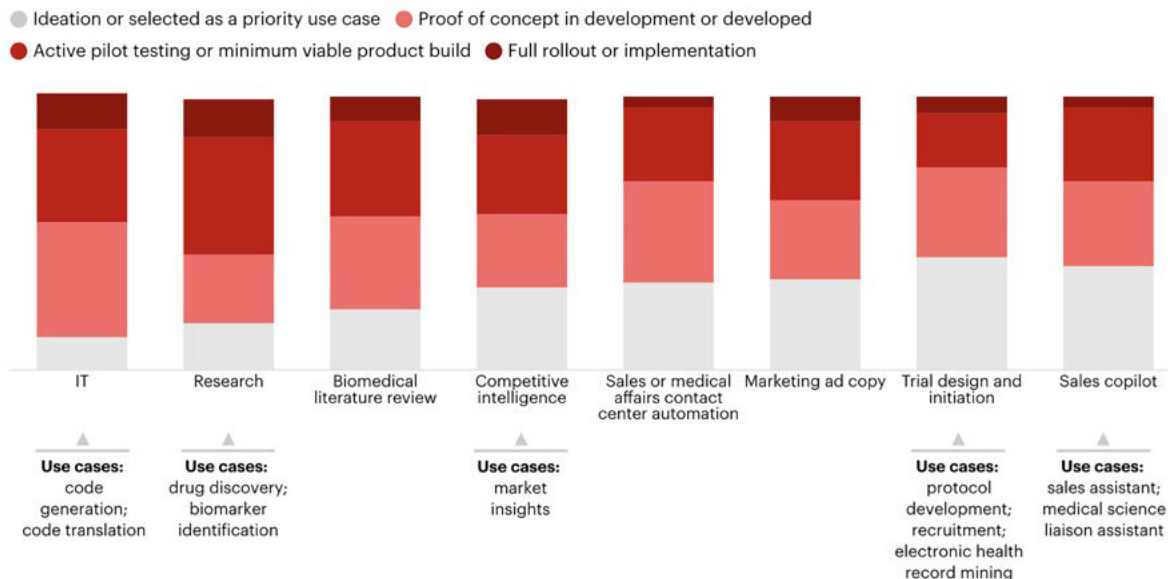
The best enterprise-wide roadmaps group use cases in thematic clusters, outlining the intent to evolve them over time. Leaders are starting with low-risk use cases and launching them in safe environments, with the ambition to test, learn, and gain confidence before going live with more mature, disruptive solutions. For instance, a company may prioritize an internal knowledge management chatbot before evolving it into an external-facing chatbot using similarly unstructured data. Or a company may begin with a patient-facing solution that relies on a human to mitigate risk, with the aim of eventually creating a fully automated version.

For example, Syneos Health, which has a multiyear deal with Microsoft to leverage OpenAI’s GPT technology, brought together a team of data scientists and business function leaders to create centralized, reusable machine-learning building blocks. In addition to working on a chatbot that can search across 400,000 clinician protocols, the biopharma company says that it is exploring applications across the value chain, from clinical trials to marketing platforms. Sanofi is also laying the groundwork for AI at scale by launching Plai, an app that harnesses internal data across the organization to

SOURCE: BAIN GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN PHARMA SURVEY 2023



## Percentage of executives who report reaching the stage of development by use case area



generate predictions and simulations, giving decision makers a comprehensive view of the company's activities and insights.

To support a prioritized roadmap, industry leaders are also ensuring that they have the appropriate technical backbone in place. Many have signed contracts with multiple generative AI foundation model providers to experiment and understand the nuanced differences in their performance.

### How to scale generative AI

If pharma companies want to generate value from generative AI as fast as the technology allows, they need to ensure that the organization is ready. Companies can take a three-tiered approach to prime their operating model for generative AI at scale:

- **Determine your strategic posture.** Leading organizations will establish decision-making and funding models that prioritize high-return use cases. In particular, they will ensure that those use cases fit within their investment themes around bold bets for the future of the business. When it comes to funding, organizations often bill generative AI investments to IT, although they typically deliver the anticipated savings to the respective functional budgets. Winning companies won't let these conflicts stand in the way of adoption. Instead, they will find ways to incentivize business unit leaders to invest in disruptive, value-generating AI initiatives.
- **Lead through change.** Generative AI at scale requires strong internal leadership and cross-functional alignment. The best companies will establish an organizational center of gravity with several executives who act as generative AI champions. The team holds the organization accountable to its roadmap and decision-making model.
- **Build the foundations.** In addition to the right technology, data, and models, generative AI at scale requires reorienting the organization to support big visions.
- **Reshape your talent strategy.** Many pharma companies continue to struggle with hiring data scientists for AI initiatives. Given the shortage of talent with generative AI expertise, companies that want to be included among the next generation of AI leaders will need to recruit

aggressively now.

- **Forge strategic partnerships.** As they build up their stable of in-house talent, leaders will partner with external vendors for support. Consider, for instance, how Sanofi is using BioMap's AI platform that converts proprietary data sets into biological maps of proteins to optimize its drug discovery process at scale, or how Bayer is working with Google to automate drafting and translating clinical trial communications in multiple languages.
- **Engage on ethics and regulation.** Data security, privacy, legal issues, and ethical considerations, such as biases in models' input and output, require a thoughtful approach from the start. While adhering to guidelines and regulations is paramount, industry leaders will go a step further with a companywide risk management approach, including guardrails that they continuously adjust to ensure safe deployment. For example, GSK has established an in-house responsible AI team that brings together experts in engineering, philosophy, and policy to explore ethical and societal considerations and implement a framework for safe and ethical development. In addition to strict infrastructure and processes, AI users receive training to ensure proper practices.

Generative AI is already top of mind for most pharma companies, with 75% citing it as a C-suite and board priority. And investors are watching closely to differentiate the pioneers from the followers.

As leadership teams move beyond experimentation into pilots and launches, they are thinking carefully about when and how to communicate their AI journey to investors. Those that can signal a structured, scalable enterprise-wide program, rather than a smattering of standalone initiatives, will reap the rewards in the next phase of AI. ■

*This article was written by Eric Berger, a Partner at Bain & Company in Boston, Robbie Sanding, a Partner at Bain & Company in Los Angeles, and KC George, a Partner at Bain & Company in San Francisco.*



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