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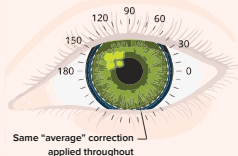
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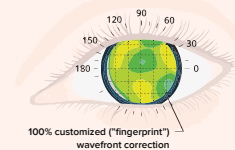
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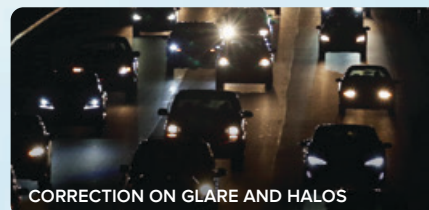
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Printed by: Times Offset (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd

(194695-W)

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

In this issue, we shed light on the staggering number of vision impairment cases that the World Health Organization (WHO) says could be prevented or successfully treated if diagnosed early — roughly one billion.



Many of the people who develop preventable vision impairment either live in areas where eye care isn't available or don't feel the need to go for screening because they mistakenly think that their lack of vision problems means their eyes are healthy. The tragedy is that several eye conditions have no symptoms in the early stages and often cause problems only when the damage is difficult to treat or untreatable. That's why experts call for improved medical services and better eye health awareness that could make a significant dent in the number of vision loss cases. The bottom line is that regular screening is crucial as it can prevent irreversible damage and save your eyesight.

We also cover a WHO report on the deadly consumption of salt. It's a seemingly harmless food additive, but excessive salt intake is associated with the largest number of deaths of all the unhealthy eating habits, with about 1.89 million people dying every year as it can cause high blood pressure and increase the risk for heart disease. In response, the WHO is now calling for greater public health measures to reduce salt intake, such as best buys policies to promote lowering salt content in essential food products and front-of-pack labelling to encourage consumers to purchase healthier alternatives.

In our You Ask, They Answer column, we asked doctors for their advice on how to deal with bloating and pregnancy problems, how to improve your teeth brushing routine, and the health benefits of bariatric surgery, which many people mistakenly consider a weight-loss procedure.

Gabriele Bettinazzi

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Available across Asia,
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North America



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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,
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Originally published in The Conversation, this piece provides advice on how to spot misinformation and ways to look for trustworthy sources

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Dr Tai Lai Yong on Cataract Surgery: Navigating the Procedure

Cataracts, a common vision impairment, can significantly impact daily life. When conventional methods like glasses are no longer effective, Cataract Surgery becomes a viable solution. Dr Tai Lai Yong, Consultant Ophthalmologist at Pantai Hospital Kuala Lumpur, delves into the details of the operation, its benefits, risks, and considerations for prospective candidates.

Overview of Cataract Surgery

Cataract Surgery is a proven and effective method for treating cataracts. The procedure involves replacing the cloudy lens with an intraocular lens (IOL), a synthetic counterpart. Typically lasting between 20 to 30 minutes, the operation is a brief yet crucial intervention.

The decision to undergo Cataract Surgery is usually made when conventional vision correction methods prove inadequate or when cataracts significantly disrupt daily activities. Your ophthalmologist may recommend the procedure after a thorough examination of your eye health.

Risks Associated with Cataract Surgery

While generally safe, like any surgical procedure, Cataract Surgery comes with inherent risks, including:

- Posterior Capsular Opacification
- Swelling of the Macula
- Increased Intraocular pressure
- Infections
- Ruptured Posterior Capsule
- Internal Bleeding within the Eye
- Cloudy or Swollen Cornea
- Dislocated Synthetic Lens
- Retina Detachment
- Blindness





It's crucial for patients to be aware of these risks and discuss them thoroughly with their ophthalmologist before proceeding with the surgery.

Eligibility Criteria for Cataract Surgery

Individuals experiencing impaired vision due to cataracts are prime candidates for Cataract Surgery. However, those with certain medical conditions, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart problems, kidney failure, and bacterial infections must be in a stable condition approved by a medical professional before undergoing the operation.

Different types of artificial lenses, such as monofocal, toric monofocal, multifocal, and toric multifocal lenses, allow Cataract Surgery to treat various eye conditions. It's important to note that the cost of the surgery may vary depending on the type of lens used.

Additional Considerations

Contrary to popular misconceptions, Cataract Surgery does not have side effects such as "glowing skin" or "firm skin." However, the operation may impact facial skin and structure.

Cataract surgery may also cause drooping of the eyelid due to levator muscle dehiscence, as well as lower eyelid entropion due to lower retractor muscle dehiscence when using eyelid speculums during surgery.

In conclusion, Cataract Surgery is a transformative solution for cataract-related vision impairments. Prospective candidates should consult their ophthalmologists to discuss eligibility, potential risks, and the most suitable lens options for their specific needs.



*Dr Tai Lai Yong
Consultant Ophthalmologist*



Q: What's bloating and its common causes?

A: Bloating is a condition where your tummy feels full, tight, and stretched often due to gas trapped in the intestine. Gas gets caught in the digestive tract in two ways: when you swallow air and when bacteria in your large intestine break down undigested food. Most stomach gas results from swallowing air and is typically released by burping, though a small amount can continue down to the colon (large intestine) to be released as flatulence. Most of the gas that causes flatulence is produced when bacteria in the large intestine break down food that was incompletely digested by enzymes in the stomach and small intestine. Certain carbohydrates are the main culprits. Protein and fat aren't major gas producers, although fats, because they slow down digestion, can contribute to a sense of bloating. Other frequent causes may be due to pregnancy or medical conditions, such as constipation, food intolerance like lactose intolerance, Celiac Disease, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD), and even cancer.

Q: How can people treat bloating at home without consulting a physician?

A: Symptoms of abdominal bloating can be reduced or prevented with a few lifestyle changes which include: lose weight, if you're overweight; reduce or avoid intake of carbonated drinks; drink from a cup or glass and not from a bottle or through a straw; eat slowly in a relaxed environment and chew your food well; eat smaller, more frequent meals instead of large meals; reduce the intake of fermentable foods; don't chew gum; eat foods high in fibre and drink lots of water if constipated; exercise regularly to improve your digestion and reduce constipation; lastly, practice yoga or a similar discipline can help with relaxation and good breathing techniques.

Q: When should people with bloating see a doctor?

A: If bloating is not improving and you are also experiencing other symptoms like abdominal pain, blood in stools, diarrhea, vomiting and unexplained weight loss, you should consult a doctor who can help you to find the root cause of your problem and recommend the best treatment.

Q: Can you recommend a good diet and other ways to prevent bloating?

A: A low fermentable diet can be beneficial to prevent and improve bloating symptoms. It is low in fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides, and polyols (FODMAP). These carbohydrates are poorly absorbed in the small intestine and pass in the colon where they are fermented by the bacteria with a consequent production of gas. The most common gas-producing foods usually include the following:

- Wheat, rye, onions, garlic, broccoli, cabbage, soy-based products, pistachio, cashew nuts, and legumes are examples of complex carbohydrates - oligosaccharides. One exception is wheat bran, which passes through your digestive system without getting broken down. This makes wheat bran a winner if you have constipation and need more fibre but also suffer from flatulence.
- Lactose found in milk and dairy products is an example of disaccharides.
- Fructose present in honey, sweeteners like corn syrup, sodas, and certain fruits like apple, pear, watermelon, and mango are examples of monosaccharides.
- Artificial sweeteners, stone fruits, apples, pears and some vegetables such as mushrooms and cauliflower are examples of polyols.

This diet, however, can be very restrictive and can also have potential side effects if self-administered, especially for people who suffer from constipation. Patients would need the help of a trained dietitian to find the best solution and adjust the diet based on their medical condition.

Dr Andrea Rajnakova

Dr Andrea Rajnakova is a Consultant Gastroenterologist at Andrea's Digestive, Colon, Liver and Gallbladder Clinic in Singapore.

Veronica Cavallini

Veronica Cavallini is a Nutritional Consultant at Andrea's Digestive, Colon, Liver and Gallbladder Clinic.



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TDOX Clinic stands as a beacon of excellence in the realm of health and aesthetic care, setting the standard for bespoke wellness services and delivering top-tier preventive and regenerative solutions. Established in 2019, our clinic, situated in the heart of Kuala Lumpur's central business district and bustling tourism hotspot, represents the visionary expertise of a seasoned entrepreneur renowned for her vast experience in both Malaysian and Asia markets.

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.

We are dedicated to delivering state-of-the-art products and services that cater to the unique needs of every customer. Our commitment to excellence, coupled with a relentless pursuit of innovation, positions us at the forefront of healthcare and aesthetic advancements.



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Q: What's bariatric or weight-loss surgery and who's a good candidate for it?

A: People often misunderstand bariatric surgery, which is not a weight-loss surgery but an ultimate solution for weight-associated medical problems. Patients often undergo the procedure because their obesity has led to a series of medical problems, and the resulting weight loss is just a bonus. Most patients want to lose weight, but what many of them don't realise is that bariatric surgery is an effective treatment for their conditions. Indeed, obesity is associated with dozens of medical problems, like high blood pressure, diabetes, sleep apnoea, and joint problems.

Good candidates are selected based on their body mass index — which uses weight and height to measure if your weight is in a healthy range — and whether they have any diseases or physical disabilities, as well as their fat distribution. There are two obesity types, global obesity and central obesity. In the former category, people are big from top to bottom, meaning that the distribution of the fat pressure in the body is equal as chest, arms, legs, and the rest of the body are all big, while in the latter case, people are only big in the belly, which increases the risk of medical problems.

Q: What are the key medical benefits for patients?

A: The procedure can cure more than 94 percent of patients with sleep apnoea disease and more than 97 percent of people with asthma, while the cure rate for type 2 diabetes is higher than 84 percent, meaning that some people can be taken off insulin. Many patients can also see improvements in their psychological problems.

Most people can also achieve significant weight-loss reduction. Those who have excellent outcomes are the people who follow a healthy lifestyle. If you are not committed to having a healthy lifestyle, doing exercise and eating good foods, then there's no point in undergoing bariatric surgery because the surgery is about improving your health, not losing weight

Q: What are the risks of bariatric surgery?

A: In the hands of a skillful surgeon, or someone who does more than 200 cases per year, bariatric surgery is even safer than doing an operation to remove the appendix. One reason is that patients must be very well prepared before undergoing bariatric surgery and cannot have any infection or other major conditions like heart and lung problems. For instance, bleeding risk is less than one percent, and, if it occurs during the procedure, can be easily controlled.

Q: What's the recovery like?

A: The operation lasts about one hour. Patients can start using the toilet two to three hours after surgery and most of them can go home the day after. In my centre, we keep people weighing 180 to 200 kilos under observation for an extra day to make sure they can take care of themselves when they are back home. People who have an office job can go back to work within two to three days, while those who do physical work, like construction, are advised to take seven to ten days of rest.

The first follow-up will be after two to three weeks, then we will see them every three months for the first year; in the second year, we'll see them every six months. We teach patients how to exercise and how to have a healthy diet while still enjoying their favourite foods. That's why, for surgeons, bariatric surgery is not only about doing the operation but also mostly being a dietitian, a personal trainer, and the go-to person for patients.

Dr Mustafa Mohamed Taher Al-Khafaji

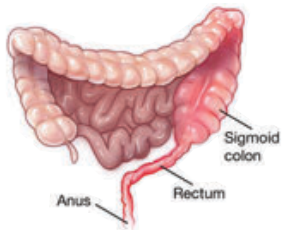
Dr Mustafa Mohamed Taher Al-Khafaji is a surgeon specialised in general, upper gastrointestinal, and bariatric surgery at the Cengild G. I. Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Overcoming the odds and challenges in infancy



Born in good health, Patient A was discharged after birth. His first few months were uneventful, but soon, troubling symptoms emerged. Unexplained vomiting and gastrointestinal discomfort prompted a diagnosis of ileus, a condition characterised by reduced intestinal movement leading to discomfort and bloating.

Unfortunately, Patient A faced another setback two months later with a recurrence of his bowel problems, accompanied by fatigue and abdominal swelling. At first, his family assumed it was a common issue for formula-fed infants, but their concerns grew, prompting a visit to the nearest clinic. From there, they were swiftly referred to the emergency department, where a devastating diagnosis was delivered: Hirschsprung disease, a rare and challenging condition.



Hirschsprung disease is a condition in which the large intestine lacks nerve cells in certain segments, causing severe bowel issues. Regular rectal washouts are required to alleviate intestinal blockage and reduce abdominal swelling.

In their quest for the best care possible, Patient A's family decided to transfer to Avisena Women's & Children's Specialist Hospital, a decision that would prove to be life-changing. At the hospital, they were welcomed by a compassionate healthcare team who not only understood the gravity of his condition but also offered unwavering support to the family during their most trying times.

Dr. Syariz Izry, Paediatrician Surgeon at Avisena Women's & Children's Specialist Hospital, undertook a meticulous surgical procedure to address his condition. The surgery involved identifying the portions of the intestine with nerves and carefully removing the segments that lacked them, ultimately reconnecting the nerve-rich intestine to the rectum. This delicate operation was made possible through the use of laparoscopy, a minimally invasive surgical technique, which minimized the invasiveness of the procedure and enhanced his recovery prospects.

Thanks to the skill and dedication of Dr. Syariz and his exceptional medical team, Patient A's surgery was a resounding success, resulting in a miraculous transformation in his health. Their commitment didn't end in the operating room; they provided emotional support and reassurance to Patient A and his family, helping them navigate the challenges of post-surgery recovery.

The journey to recovery has been marked by significant milestones, and the most notable include the restoration of regular bowel movements, which has transformed him into a joyful and vibrant baby. Throughout this arduous process, Patient A's guardian has embraced a wealth of knowledge about Hirschsprung disease. She has shown remarkable resilience and determination as she navigates the complexities of her child's condition, emerging as a well-informed advocate for Patient A's health and well-being.

For more information about Avisena Paediatric Surgery services, kindly contact us at +603-5515 1888. The Paediatric Clinic is located on the 10th floor at Avisena Women's & Children's Specialist Hospital.

Connect with us online at:





Q: Should I use an electric or manual toothbrush?

A: When it comes to choosing between an electric or manual toothbrush, it ultimately depends on your personal preference and oral health needs. Both types of toothbrushes can effectively clean your teeth, but here are some factors to consider when making your decision:

i. Efficiency: An electric toothbrush has a vibrating or rotating head that helps to remove plaque and bacteria more efficiently than manual toothbrushes. Generally, electric toothbrushes require less effort and technique compared to manual toothbrushes, therefore making them ideal for those with limited dexterity or difficulty reaching certain areas of the mouth. They often feature built-in timers to ensure you brush for the recommended two minutes, and some even have pressure sensors to alert you if you're applying too much force.

ii. Convenience and cost: Manual toothbrushes are generally more portable for travel and easily replaced. Electric toothbrushes come with charging units and batteries for them to function. Electric toothbrushes tend to have a higher upfront cost than manual toothbrushes. While manual toothbrushes are relatively inexpensive and easily replaced, electric toothbrushes require additional costs for replacement heads and batteries or charging units.

iii. Oral health conditions: Certain dental conditions may benefit from using an electric toothbrush. For example, if you have braces, an electric toothbrush can be helpful in removing plaque from hard-to-reach areas.

Ultimately, the most important factor in maintaining good oral hygiene is the technique and regularity of brushing, regardless of the type of toothbrush you choose.

Q: How many times a day should I brush my teeth?

A: The recommended frequency to brush your teeth is at least twice a day – once in the morning and once before bed. Brushing your teeth thoroughly for about two minutes each time using a soft-bristled toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste can help effectively clean your teeth and prevent dental issues. Brushing after meals is encouraged, but to avoid damaging your teeth, wait at least 30 minutes after a meal and one hour after consuming acidic foods or drinks before brushing your teeth.

Q: Should I also floss and use a mouthwash after brushing to keep the teeth healthy?

A: Yes, flossing and using mouthwash have different benefits that complement brushing to improve your oral hygiene.

Flossing helps to remove plaque and food particles from between your teeth and along your gumline where your toothbrush may not reach. This can prevent tooth decay, gum disease, and bad breath. Flossing also stimulates your gums and improves blood flow, which help prevent inflammation and infection. You should floss at least once a day, preferably before brushing, to clean the interdental spaces.

Mouthwash helps to kill bacteria in your mouth and freshens your breath. Some mouthwashes contain fluoride, which can strengthen tooth enamel and prevent tooth decay. Mouthwash can also be helpful for reducing plaque, gingivitis, and gum irritation.

Q: How often should I see a dentist for scaling and polishing?

A: The recommended frequency for scaling and polishing may vary depending on individual factors, such as oral health, previous dental history, and personal habits. However, as a general guideline, scaling and polishing every six months is typically recommended for adults.

Regular scaling and polishing help maintain good oral hygiene and prevent the buildup of harmful bacteria by removing plaque and tartar buildup, which can contribute to tooth decay, gum disease, and other dental issues.

Dentalpro

The article was produced by the team at Dentalpro, a dental specialist centre in Kuala Lumpur.

Tackling Malaysia's Growing Obesity Problem

Avisena's Holistic Obesity Treatment Offerings



Obesity rates in Malaysia have doubled since 2011, with nearly half the population now overweight. This explosion of obesity also fuels over 50 accompanying diseases like diabetes and heart disease. With proper awareness and treatment access, obesity can be better controlled through lifestyle changes first, followed by surgery if conservative methods fail.

Non-Surgical Option: Comprehensive Lifestyle Modification

First-line treatment involves adopting healthier nutrition, activity, behaviors and support systems:

Healthy Eating: Lower calorie intake via minimally processed whole foods high in nutrients but not salt/sugar. Maintain consistent meal spacing.

Being Active: Exercise moderately like brisk walking 30 minutes most days, gradually increasing duration and intensity. Enlist others to motivate.

Behavior Changes: Set specific targets to monitor progress. Identify and curb overeating triggers. Keep food logs to stay mindful of habits. Prioritize sleep and stress management.

Getting Support: Consult health professionals like dietitians if required. Join community programs for encouragement. Rely on loved ones for inspiration.

Sticking to these pillars enables effective weight loss without surgery initially.

Bariatric Surgery - An Option for Those Who Struggle with Lifestyle Changes

For patients unresponsive to sustained lifestyle changes despite adherence to the above, bariatric surgery presents the next option. Procedures like gastric sleeves, bypasses and gastric banding promote weight reduction by permanently changing digestion's anatomy to restrict food intake and absorption. But surgery must be combined with the same comprehensive lifestyle overhaul.

Avisena Specialist Hospital provides staged obesity treatment starting with intensive non-surgical weight loss programs via their Diabetes and Metabolic Care Unit. For patients failing these, Avisena offers advanced bariatric surgical options under trusted experts. With personalized stepwise offerings from lifestyle modification to surgery, Avisena empowers obesity sufferers to transform their health.

Learn more about treatment options by scheduling an appointment with obesity management experts at +603 5515 1888

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Q: What are the most common problems associated with pregnancy and when should women see a doctor to check them?

A: Pregnancy changes take place week by week, physically as well as emotionally. Each week has new changes, new signs, developments, and its own complications. Every pregnancy is different, so are the changes and experiences.

Some of the common early signs, even before a positive pregnancy test, include raised body temperature, breast tenderness/pain, and increased sensitivity to smell. Some mothers will feel tired and lose energy (pregnancy fatigue).

Some women will have light vaginal bleeding or spotting around the time that you would expect their periods. It's known as implantation bleeding and is very normal. While others might have an increase in vaginal discharge, thin milky white discharge is normal.

Early pregnancy bloating is also a sign pregnant mothers notice before missing their periods. Bloating and constipation usually occur in early pregnancy due to changes in the hormones. There's also heartburn and indigestion in the early weeks. Most of these symptoms are due to the hormone progesterone that's very important to maintain the pregnancy. Constipation can also be due to consuming iron supplements early in pregnancy.

Morning sickness and vomiting usually appears at about 5-6 weeks after the last period, sometimes earlier. There's also food aversion during the early stages of pregnancy. Most of these symptoms are due to the increase in the pregnancy hormones. There is also excessive salivation (ptyalism gravidarum).

By the fifth week, some will also present with an increase in

frequency of micturition (urination) and an increase in urgency or even urinary tract infections (UTI). This is mainly due to delays in bladder emptying or an increase in overall body fluids that leads to extra pressure on the bladder.

Having regular and early antenatal checkups will ensure proper growth of the baby and a healthy pregnancy.

Q: Which are the safest medications women could take to manage these problems?

A: Although some medicines are considered safe during pregnancy, the effects of other medicines on the unborn baby are unknown. Certain medicines can be most harmful to a developing baby when taken during the first three months of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant.

Safe medications that can be taken in the first trimester include Paracetamol, Promethazine (anti-vomiting), antacids (gastritis), fibres (constipation), and vitamin B6, which help with nausea and vomiting during pregnancy. All pregnant women should be on folic acid and prenatal vitamins throughout their pregnancy.

Some of the medications below, however, should be avoided as they can have an impact on foetal development:

1. Vitamin A derivatives such as isotretinoin which is commonly used to treat acne can cause birth defects. Antibiotics such as doxycycline that's commonly used to treat acne is also not recommended.

2. Prolonged usage of antifungal medication is not recommended. However, single usage of Fluconazole 150mg to treat vaginal yeast infection has not been found to produce any abnormalities.

3. Antihistamines, commonly taken for flu and nasal congestion, are not categorised under the "safe to take during pregnancy" list. The guidelines do recommend chlorpheniramine, cetirizine, and loratadine as safe options after the first trimester.

4. Psychiatric medications such as Benzodiazepines have been shown to have an effect on foetal development.

5. Blood thinning medications, like Warfarin, used to treat and prevent blood clotting in the heart and veins can cause a rare condition called Foetal Warfarin Syndrome. This causes miscarriages.

6. NSAIDS and anti inflammatory drugs (pain killers) should be avoided during all stages of pregnancy.

7. Anti-malaria medication is also not recommended during pregnancy. They cause foetal anaemia.

Dr Somaskandar Sivasuntharam

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

Preserving Sweet Visions: Battle against Diabetic Retinopathy at Eyecentric, BTMC



With over half a billion people worldwide living with diabetes, this chronic disease has firmly established itself as a global health challenge. A recent Lancet report (2023) sends an alarming signal, projecting that this number will double over the next 30 years. Among the myriad of complications associated with diabetes, one of the most concerning is diabetic retinopathy. This condition affects approximately 27% of those with diabetes and can lead to significant vision impairment and, in some cases, blindness.

Understanding the Four Stages of Diabetic Retinopathy

Diabetic retinopathy is a complex condition that can be divided into four stages, with non-proliferative stages being the most common presentation. These stages include:

1. Mild Non-proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy
2. Moderate Non-proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy
3. Severe Non-proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy
4. Proliferative Diabetic Retinopathy

The severity of vision impairment varies across these stages, from no discernible symptoms to progressive visual blurring, black spots, or floaters, and potentially leading to blindness.

Expert Insights and a Multidisciplinary Approach at Eyecentric

Dr M Narendran is the Consultant Ophthalmologist & Vitreoretinal surgeon at Eyecentric in Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre (BTMC). In BTMC, a comprehensive solution is offered for diabetic retinopathy, from screening to diabetes management. The facilities enable the performance of essential procedures such as eye angiograms, laser treatments, anti-VEGF injections, and intricate diabetic eye surgeries.

According to Dr Naren, in managing diabetic retinopathy, collaboration among medical specialists is paramount. Ophthalmologists work closely with healthcare professionals from various disciplines, including endocrinologists, nephrologists, cardiologists, physicians and general practitioners. This teamwork ensures comprehensive disease management, complementing the ophthalmologist's efforts to preserve sight. Patient cooperation

and adherence to medical advice are also essential.

In the early stages of non-proliferative diabetic retinopathy, regular follow-up and meticulous monitoring are essential. Collaborative efforts with physicians to control systemic diseases are crucial. When the disease progresses to a severe stage, treatment options come into play. These include laser photocoagulation, anti-VEGF injections, and, in advanced cases, surgical intervention. Surgery becomes a necessity when confronted with bleeding into the back of the eye, which, if left untreated, may lead to scarring and retinal detachment, ultimately causing blindness.

Embracing a Holistic Approach to Well-being

In addition to eye health, maintaining optimal control of blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels has far-reaching implications for cardiovascular, renal, and neurological well-being. Dedicated dietitians offer guidance on achieving a balanced, healthful diet tailored to individual needs.

Embracing an active lifestyle, ensuring proper hydration, prioritizing rest and sleep, and adhering to a well-rounded diet are essential steps toward maintaining an overall state of well-being, ready to face the demands of daily life.

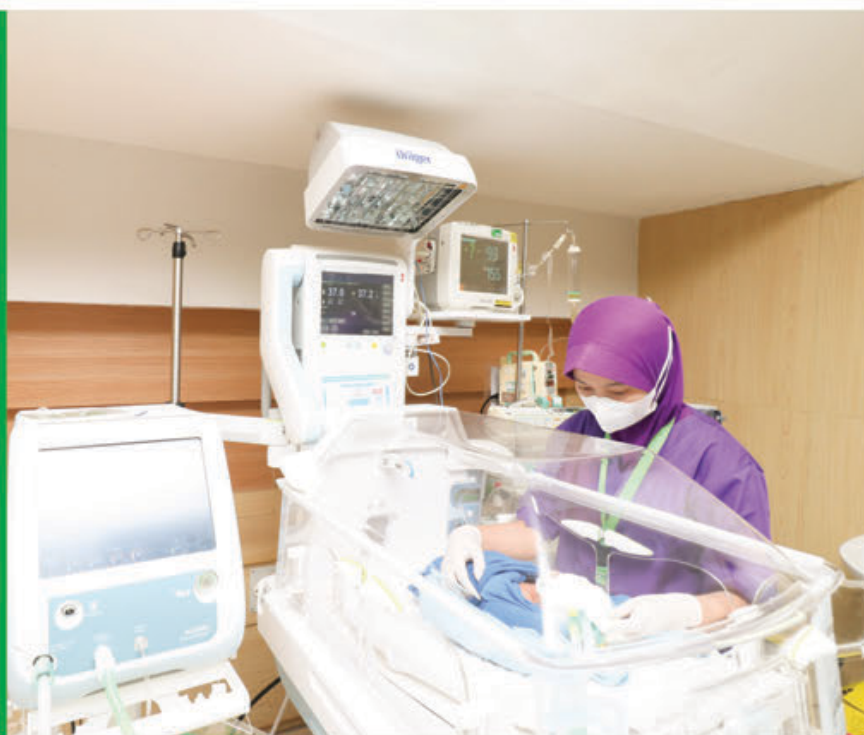
Preserving Sight and Health

Diabetic retinopathy is a global health crisis that threatens the vision and well-being of millions. Early detection and a collaborative, multidisciplinary approach are essential for preserving sight. Effective diabetes management, along with meticulous attention to associated risk factors and regular eye screenings, is imperative for mitigating the impact of diabetic retinopathy. Dr. Naren and the team at Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre's Eyecentric play a pivotal role in this ongoing battle, offering hope and comprehensive care to individuals affected by diabetic retinopathy. Together, healthcare professionals and patients can stand strong against this silent threat to vision and health.

To know more about Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre, visit <https://bukittinggimedicalcentre.com> or call 017-3253888

Special Care for Your Little One at RSIA Bunda Jakarta's NICU

When the joyous moment of welcoming a baby comes, it often comes with challenges that require special attention. At RSIA Bunda Jakarta, we understand this very well. For this reason, we have prepared a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) with the most cutting-edge technology and supported by qualified doctors. The NICU at RSIA Bunda Jakarta is designed as the perfect environment to carefully nurture and protect the most precious lives.



Specialized neonatal care is provided from birth to 28 days of age. This is a crucial time for both mother and child. To meet the needs of neonates, or newborns, a variety of neonatal care options are offered. These include screenings for congenital heart disease, hearing problems, and other disorders that are performed on all babies.

For babies who need to be admitted to the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit), there is presently the FICare - Family Integrated Care Program, an innovative new service which is constantly being strengthened. NICU care for prematurely born babies includes neonatal treatments. Premature babies have low body weights on average and are more prone to different health problems since their organs' anatomical and functional development are still immature. Parents of premature babies are likely to discover that the RSIA Bunda Jakarta FICare program offers the necessary assistance to avoid or minimize growth and development issues. Additionally, FICare assists in preparing parents to take care of these premature newborns from the moment of birth.

Through the initiative, mothers who are still unable to breastfeed their children can even give them colostrum in the NICU with the assistance of their fathers. FICare activities include colostrum/breastfeeding using various methods, skin-to-skin contact,

diaper changing, temperature checks by parents, and intense and open discussions between the team of doctors/nurses and parents. Experts and medical personnel also provide intensive care for babies with special conditions in the NICU.

"In comparison to other hospitals in Jakarta, RSIA Bunda Jakarta has fairly complete and modern equipment. Here, a nurse will accompany a newborn admitted to the NICU and monitor the infant's growth, every minute and every moment, for the entire 24-hours period" said Dr. R. Adhi Teguh Perma Iskandar, Sp.A (K)

Dr. Adhi added, "We excel not only in having fully functional equipment, but also in how well we manage to work effectively as a team." To give the best care possible for the patients under their care, NICU doctors are working together with a variety of specialists, including eye specialists, ENT specialists, pediatric neurology specialists, pediatric respiratory specialists, pediatric metabolic nutrition specialists, and even pediatric physiotherapists.

With a long legacy of excellence in healthcare, RSIA Bunda Jakarta is your reliable partner for your child's health journey. We are committed to providing the utmost standard of care, ensuring your little one gets the loving care they deserve.



Dr. R. Adhi Teguh Perma Iskandar, Sp.A (K)
Pediatrician Neonatologist Consultant RSIA Bunda Jakarta

Incomparable Expertise

Our NICU has a dedicated team of neonatologists, certified nurses and other experts, ready to provide around-the-clock personalized care for premature babies or infants who are born with health complications. With their expertise and meticulous approach, we ensure that your baby is in good hands.



Offering holistic mother and child services, Bunda Group Hospital puts patient comfort first.

As the endemic era approaches, societal tendencies are shifting to make health an essential aspect of today's way of life. As a family health service provider since 1973, PT Bundamedik Tbk (Bundamedik Healthcare System - BMHS) a healthcare ecosystem that manages Bunda Group Hospitals, is making an attempt to adapt to this trend by strengthening its transformation through a healthcare lifestyle approach.

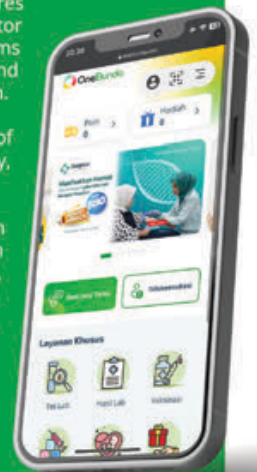
In addition to strengthened digital innovation, better and integrated health services and facilities, and the optimization of holistic health services through the collaboration of a team of physicians and health workers who are well-known in the community, are some of the progressive steps being taken to improve patients' comfort.

The presence of multiple Centers of Excellence and OneBunda.com, a digital chain that combines several ongoing health services provided by BMHS and facilitates patient access to care via an omnichannel mechanism, are two examples of how the Bunda Group Hospital is gradually improved.

OneBunda has become more innovative, with a variety of features that patients can access quickly and easily, such as making doctor appointments, teleconsultation, lab results, and loyalty programs for OneBunda users, as well as digital child vaccination books and digital pregnancy books, whose users are growing by the month.

Nurhadi Yudiyanto, CEO of BMHS Group & Managing Director of PT Bundamedik Tbk explained, "patient health is our top priority, while convenience is an important element to support it".

"We are focusing on building a leading healthcare ecosystem focused on modern health technology, including through OneBunda, which can assist patients with online registration, online test results, so that patients and all their family members can enjoy health services in a more efficient and practical way. Nowadays, online resources and digital books regarding pregnancy and vaccinations are also becoming our patient's interests", according to Nurhadi.



Safe Childbirth, Track Health of Mother and Unborn Child Anytime, Anywhere.



At the beginning of Bunda Group Hospital's existence, the focus was on mother and child services. For mothers who are preparing for the arrival of their baby, it is important for the expectant mother to do a series of examinations, starting from routine physical examination including blood pressure measurement, weight check, and general evaluation of the mother's physical condition, laboratory examination, ultrasonography examination, pap smear test, Sexually Transmitted Disease test, and other series of treatments.

Not only for the mother, but it is also important to keep a record of normal fetal movements and report any significant changes to the doctor and perform a series of tests. Genetic disease tests and tests such as chromosomal abnormality tests or other genetic tests may be recommended depending on certain risk factors or indications, known as fetomaternal screening.

"Fetomaternal" is a term that refers to the relationship between the foetus (feto-) and the mother (maternal) during pregnancy. It encompasses all aspects of health related to the well-being of the mother and the development of the foetus during pregnancy. With the digital pregnancy book, Bunda Group Hospital hopes to make it easier for expectant mothers to maintain their health and anticipate possible risks of ill health during the birth process or after the baby is born.

Holistic care in hospitals is more than just a medical procedure; it is a dedication to sustaining patient comfort, restoring patient hope, and tailoring each individual's unique health journey.

Blood pressure self-monitoring can lower heart disease risk in new mothers

The practice outperformed the normal standard of care

Women who regularly check their blood pressure after giving birth can cut their risk of heart attacks and strokes in the future, according to recent research presented at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions.

Around 10 percent of pregnant women are affected by dangerously high blood pressure levels, and a third of those with the condition during pregnancy will require blood pressure treatment within the next 10 years while also facing an increased risk for future heart attack, stroke, and heart failure.

Researchers from the University of Oxford analysed the blood pressure levels of 220 new mothers who had higher than normal readings during pregnancy and either self-monitored their blood pressure daily at home or received the normal standard of care. The former got advice on the dosage of blood pressure lowering medications based on their readings, while the latter consulted a midwife about 10 days after delivery and their GP six to eight weeks after.

The researchers found that self-monitoring led to improved blood pressure control in the first year after giving birth. After eight months, the first group's reading averaged around 126/82 mmHg while the second group's was 131/86 mmHg. Experts say that such a reduction of about 5 mmHg can delay the development of high blood pressure by several years while also reducing heart attack and stroke risks by 20 and 40 percent, respectively.

"As we investigate the best way to provide this care on a large scale, we hope our findings will act as a reminder to healthcare professionals and encourage them to keep a close eye on the new mother under their care after they have been discharged from hospital," Dr Jamie Kitt, a researcher at the University of Oxford who led the trial, said in a press release.



Obesity medication cut risk for heart disease

Large trial offers new strategy against a key obesity-associated health risk

The drug semaglutide was able to reduce cardiovascular events by 20 percent, cutting the risk for death caused by heart disease, nonfatal heart attacks, and strokes, according to a multi-centre international clinical trial.

Semaglutide is usually prescribed for type 2 diabetes or chronic weight management, but the new study showed it was similarly effective in adults who were overweight or obese but had no diabetes. Participants who received the drug also lost about 9.4 percent of their body weight while seeing improvements in other risk factors for heart disease.

Researchers analysed 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).

"There's growing recognition that obesity and overweight are really metabolic diseases, and yet, effective therapies have been quite limited," Dr Michael Lincoff, study lead author and vice chair for research in the Cleveland Clinic's Department of Cardiovascular Medicine, said in a press release. "This study of semaglutide demonstrates the effectiveness of a new pathway to reduce the excess risk associated with obesity of important and potentially deadly cardiovascular complications."

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Experimental drug to edit DNA could offer permanent fix for high cholesterol levels

The treatment might cure genetic condition that increases the risk of heart disease

A new medication that alters a gene responsible for high cholesterol levels has shown promise for treating patients with a genetic disorder that raises their levels of bad cholesterol since an early age.

LDL cholesterol is a waxy substance that can build up in the arteries and block blood flow, causing a heart attack or stroke, but people with an inherited condition called familial hypercholesterolemia face an increased risk due to genetic mutations that make it harder for the body to remove cholesterol from the blood. If untreated, it can cause a heart attack in about 50 percent of men by the age of 50 and in roughly 30 percent of women by the age of 60, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The new drug, called VERVE-101, successfully lowered cholesterol levels in patients with a specific type of the condition — heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia — by modifying the gene PCSK9 in a way that prevents it from raising blood cholesterol.

“We can achieve clinically meaningful LDL reductions with a single dose,” said study leader Dr Andrew Bellinger, a cardiologist and chief scientific officer at biotechnology company Verve Therapeutics.

People with the condition usually have to take medications for life, but in some cases these are not able to lower cholesterol to a healthy level. VERVE-101 promises to make daily treatment a thing of the past. “This whole concept of ‘one and done’ is really amazing,” Dr Pam Taub, a cardiologist at the University of California, San Diego, who was not involved in the research, told *Science News*.

However, Dr Taub stressed there were still potential safety issues to investigate as one patient in the trial had a heart attack. Similarly, Dr Karol Watson, a cardiologist at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, told *Science News* that this “is a strategy that could be revolutionary, but we have to make sure it’s safe. You are changing the genome forever.”

Couples may also share high blood pressure

Evidence could improve treatment with customised management for couples

A large international trial suggests that middle-aged and older straight people are at increased risk of suffering from high blood pressure when their partner or spouse has it.

Researchers delved into the blood pressure readings of almost 34,000 couples from the US, UK, India, and China, people who were married or living together as partners. The results showed that in nearly half of them both partners had hypertension, i.e., high blood pressure. The evidence could be useful to better treat the condition by offering couple-tailored management.

“Many people know that high blood pressure is common in middle-aged and older adults, yet we were surprised to find that among many older couples, both husband and wife had high blood pressure,” the study’s senior author, Dr Chihua Li, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Michigan, said in a news release. “For instance, in the U.S., among more than 35% of couples who were ages 50 or older, both had high blood pressure.”

Previous research conducted in small regions or single countries had already shown that partners might share hypertension, but the new study is the first to analyse couples in different high- and middle-income countries, according to co-author Dr Jithin Sam Varghese, an assistant research professor at Emory Global Diabetes Research Center at Emory University.



RESTORING VISION WITH A CORNEA TRANSPLANT

By Dr Vanitha Hema Ratnalingam, ParkCity Medical Centre

The cornea is the outermost layer of the eye. A healthy cornea allows light to enter the eye and focuses the light rays onto the retina. When the cornea is damaged, a cornea transplant may be necessary to restore vision.

What is a cornea transplant

A cornea transplant is an operation where diseased or damaged cornea tissue is replaced with healthy donor tissue. This operation is also known as “keratoplasty”. Conditions that can be treated with a cornea transplant include:

- Corneal scarring from previous injury or infection
- Thinning of the cornea which causes it to lose its normal shape (e.g. Keratoconus)
- Cloudiness of the cornea caused by endothelial cell loss (e.g. Fuch’s endothelial dystrophy, intraoperative trauma)

Different types of corneal transplant surgery

There are two surgical options for cornea transplantation:

1. Penetrating Keratoplasty

This is also known as a full thickness cornea transplant. It involves removing the entire thickness of the damaged cornea and replacing it with healthy donor tissue cut out into the same size and shape.

2. Lamellar keratoplasty

Lamellar keratoplasty is an operation in which the diseased layers are removed and replaced leaving in place the patient’s own healthy tissue. This type of surgery includes anterior lamellar keratoplasty or endothelial keratoplasty. In the former, the anterior or outer layers of the cornea are transplanted and



the healthy inner layers left intact. On the other hand, endothelial keratoplasty involves transplanting the inner corneal layers while retaining the healthy outer layers

The advantages of lamellar keratoplasty include a reduced risk of rejection and a stronger eye.

Risks of cornea transplant

In uncomplicated cases the success rate of a first-time cornea transplant is 90%. However, overtime the survival rate drops to 74% at 5 year and 62% by 10 years. Rejection can occur in up to 10 % of cornea transplants. This happens when your immune system recognizes the donated cornea as foreign tissue and attacks it. This can be treated with steroid eyedrops if picked up early. Symptoms of graft rejection include the following

- Redness**
- Sensitivity to light**
- Vision becomes blur**
- Pain**

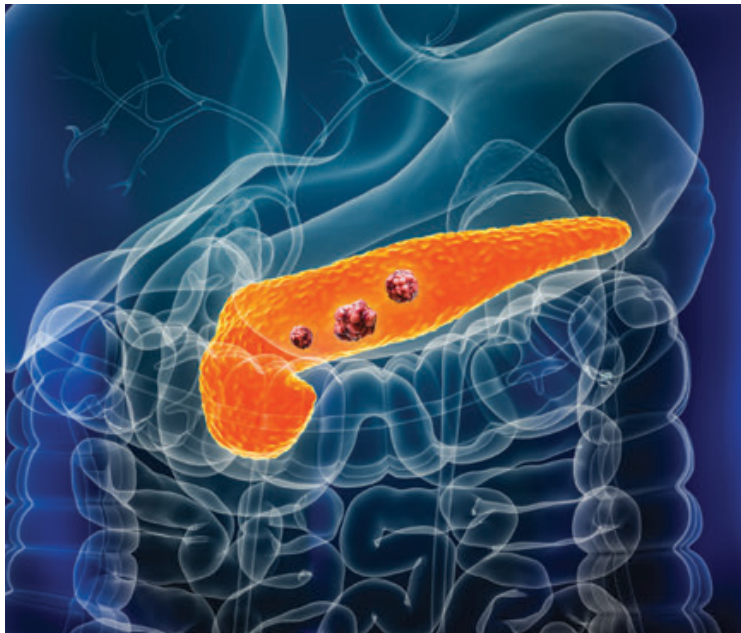
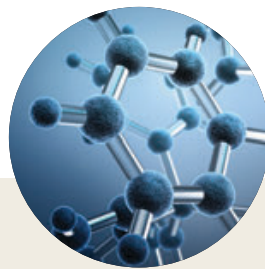
Other complications include infection, bleeding, pressure increase within the eyeball and problems with the stitches used to secure the cornea

Finding a donor cornea

Corneas used in transplants come from people who have died. Unlike other organs transplants such as kidneys and liver, cornea transplants do not require tissue matching. All donors are screened for infectious diseases and their corneas screened thoroughly before being deemed suitable for a transplant. In Malaysia, the number of donors is low and inadequate to meet the needs of patients so, the majority of corneas used is imported from other countries.



Dr Vanitha Hema Ratnalingam (Consultant Ophthalmologist and Corneal Surgeon)



Heart drug shows promise against pancreatic cancer

Lab research highlights usefulness of engineering tissue for drug testing

A medication for heart problems might also be effective in treating pancreatic cancer, say the findings of a new study that used lab-grown tissue called organoids to test potential treatments.

Researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine in the US grew tumour organoids containing a genetic mutation that drives growth of the most common type of pancreatic cancer, called pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma, and tested more than 6,000 medications to block its development. The drug that succeeded in doing so was the heart drug perhexiline maleate. While the genetically mutated organoids led to cancer growth by producing cholesterol, perhexiline maleate was able to reverse this production.

“Our findings identify hyperactive cholesterol synthesis as a vulnerability that may be targetable in most pancreatic cancers,” said Dr Todd Evans, study co-senior author and vice chair for research in surgery at Weill Cornell Medicine, in a press release.

The use of organoids was crucial to finding a good treatment candidate. Lab-grown organoids made from animal or human tissue are now becoming more common in medical research as they can mimic disease patterns, thus providing useful testing grounds for better treatments.

“This study also highlights the value of using genetically well-defined organoids to model cancer and discover new treatment strategies,” said Dr Shuibing Chen, another co-senior author and director of the Center for Genomic Health at Weill Cornell Medicine, in the press release.

Breathing in tiny sensors could streamline lung cancer diagnosis

The technology might offer an easy solution to improve diagnosis in low-resource regions

Inhalable nanoparticles developed at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) were successfully used to diagnose lung cancer through a simple urine test.

Nanoparticle sensors are substances that can be easily ingested through a nebulizer or inhaler and can react with tumour cells to produce specific chemicals that accumulate in urine. They can then be identified with a paper urine test strip in about 20 minutes.

The standard diagnostic test for lung cancer is a computer tomography (CT) scan, where images of internal tissues are taken through X-rays, but this requires high-tech imaging equipment that isn't always available, especially in poor-resource areas, and involves potentially harmful radiation.

“When we developed this technology, our goal was to provide a method that can detect cancer with high specificity and sensitivity, and also lower the threshold for accessibility, so that hopefully we can improve the resource disparity and inequity in early detection of lung cancer,” Dr Qian Zhong, one of the lead authors and an MIT research scientist, said in a press release.

This approach might also streamline lung cancer diagnosis in low-income countries as it could give people test results in one single visit.

“The idea would be you come in and then you get an answer about whether you need a follow-up test or not, and we could get patients who have early lesions into the system so that they could get curative surgery or lifesaving medicines,” said Dr Sangeeta Bhatia, a professor of health sciences and technology at MIT, in the press release.

The researchers used mice to engineer lung tumours similar to those developing in humans and found that the sensors were able to diagnose cancer in the animals at an early stage that would equate to stage 1 or 2 in people. However, to make the technique viable in humans, a greater number of sensors and multiple paper strips may be needed.



MAHKOTA
MEDICAL CENTRE
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Organization Accredited
by Joint Commission International

The 1st in Malaysia for Breast Cancer Clinical Care Programme Certification (CCPC)



Celebrating 30 Years And Beyond

As we stand on the threshold of a significant milestone, it is with immense joy and gratitude that we announce the 30th anniversary of Mahkota Medical Centre. Thirty years of unwavering commitment to healthcare excellence, compassionate service, and a steadfast dedication to our community.

This journey began three decades ago, and it has been marked by moments of triumph, challenges that fortified our resolve, and, above all, the shared spirit of unity and support that defines Mahkota.

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to each member of our incredible team, the skilled medical professionals, dedicated team members, and all those who have been a part of our journey. Your tireless efforts, passion for healing, and commitment to delivering top-notch healthcare have been the driving force behind our success.

To our cherished patients and their families, thank you for entrusting us with your health and well-being. Your stories of recovery, resilience, and the trust you place in Mahkota Medical Centre inspire us daily. We are truly honoured to be a part of your lives.

Mahkota Medical Centre is dedicated to establishing itself as the most reputable referral hospital in South-East Asia by bringing together the most competent medical capabilities from within and outside of our hospital.



Treatment to lower cholesterol could offer hope against colorectal cancer

Several existing drugs provide ready-made approach

Researchers from Weill Cornell Medicine in the US have found that the production of cholesterol drives the development of precancerous growths called serrated polyps as well as the cancers that later develop from them, hinting at a promising target for treatment.

Cholesterol is a substance the body uses to produce healthy cells, but when it builds up in the arteries it can increase the risk for heart problems. Many types of cholesterol-lowering medications have been available for decades to decrease this risk.

In the new study, researchers focused on mice that had serrated polyps and tumours similar to those seen in humans and demonstrated that stopping cholesterol production prevented their progression.

“Serrated-type polyps and tumors currently are not treated differently from other colorectal neoplasias, but as our work shows, they have this specific metabolic vulnerability that can be targeted,” study co-senior author and professor of oncology Dr Jorge Moscat of Weill Cornell Medicine said in a press release.

Previous research has already suggested that cholesterol production was associated with certain cancers, including colorectal malignancies. However, it had not been shown that lowering cholesterol with existing drugs like statins could also prevent colorectal cancers.

“Trials of statins to prevent colorectal cancer have had conflicting results,” co-author and oncology professor Dr Maria Diaz-Meco of Weill Cornell Medicine said in the press release. “Our findings suggest that this is because targeting cholesterol has a preventive but selective effect only against polyps and tumors of this serrated type.”



Quitting alcohol can reduce cancer risk

No amount of drinking is safe as even a single glass can increase risk

A review of the available evidence on alcohol consumption and cancer found that people who reduced or stopped drinking could cut their risk of developing oral and oesophageal cancers.

The research was commissioned by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, a World Health Organization (WHO) body that classifies alcoholic drinks as substances that can contribute to causing several cancers, including oral, oesophageal, colorectal, and breast malignancies.

“Even a single glass per week is sufficient to increase the risk for several types of cancer that are not related to the liver,” Dr Mike Cusnir, chief oncologist at Mount Sinai Hospital who was not involved in the review, told *CBS News*. “In the past, we used to say a single drink of alcohol a day will increase the risk, what we didn’t know is that in the patients that quit completely alcohol, that the risk would go back to the baseline of non-consumers of alcohol beverages.”

The researchers, however, also found gaps in the evidence related to the benefits of quitting alcohol to reduce the risk of other cancers (e.g., liver and colorectum), such as how long people should quit before they could achieve reduced risk or how much reduction of consumption was needed to cut cancer risk.

More research to close these gaps will provide crucial “evidence on the potential benefits of alcohol reduction or cessation in cancer causation and thus indirectly further support alcohol-control measures to reduce consumption,” they wrote in *The New England Journal of Medicine*.

RSIA PUSURA AS BUNDA MORULA SURABAYA UNDER BMHS GROUP

Morula IVF Indonesia is expanding its services to the people of Surabaya and its surrounding areas by introducing fertility and IVF services at RSIA PUSURA TEGALSARI, now rebranded as BUNDA MORULA SURABAYA, located at JL. Tegalsari no. 59, Tegalsari, Kecamatan Tegalsari, Surabaya. Under the umbrella of Bundamedik Healthcare System (BHMS) Group. Bunda Morula Surabaya represents the next step in PT Morula Indonesia growth strategy as a pioneer in demonstrating its commitment as a provider of comprehensive fertility services, supported by a skilled and experienced medical team.

Bunda Morula Surabaya offers a complete and integrated reproductive technology facility, primarily specializing in In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and Intrauterine Insemination (IUI), complemented by advanced technology including Pre-Implantation Genetic Testing for Aneuploidy (PGT-A), ERA (Endometrial Receptivity Analysis), doctor consultation rooms, dedicated operation theaters for Ovum Pick Up (OPU), Embryo Transfer (ET), and other surgical procedures. Moreover, MIMK provides additional support services for the IVF program, such as laparoscopy, hysteroscopy, urology and andrology consultations, psychological support, acupuncture, adjuvant therapy, ovarian and endometrial PRP, and other complementary procedures.

"PGT-A technology is the latest advanced IVF technology for chromosome screening in embryos belonging to a couple, designed to aid the success of pregnancy in IVF programs. PGT-A technology is typically recommended for couples who have previously undergone IVF but experienced failures. There is a higher likelihood of chromosomal abnormalities in embryos for couples undergoing IVF when the female partner is above 35 years old the higher the chance of a successful pregnancy" said dr. Nanang Rudianto Widodo, Sp. OG., Subs.F.E.R, as the Chairman of Assisted Reproduction Technology Board and as Clinician / Obstetry and Gynaecology Specialist Doctor in Bunda Morula Surabaya.



dr. Nanang Rudianto Widodo,
Sp. OG., Subs.F.E.R

An individual's fertility status is categorized as either primary infertility or secondary infertility if they engage in unprotected sexual intercourse for a year or more, and the female partner does not become pregnant. The cause of infertility can be attributed to factors related to either the male or female partner. Typically, the best sperm quality in men is found between the ages of 30 to 35 years, with a decline in quality around the age of 40. However, at the of 55, reproductive sperm quality can improve once again.

It's hoped that Bunda Morula Surabaya will become the leading IVF clinic in the East Java Region, reaching a wider captive market and providing services to couples who are on the journey of IVF. Therefore, Bunda Morula Surabaya is committed to delivering high quality services, the latest technological innovations, and instilling hope in couples facing challenges in natural fertilization with the expansion of its reach and the introduction of new face of Bunda Morula Surabaya the clinic aims to make positive impact.



About PT. Morula Indonesia

Morula IVF Indonesia is a part of the Bunda medik Healthcare System, focusing on the development of fertility clinics under the name 'Morula IVF in Indonesia. In its development, in 1997, the Bundamedik Healthcare System established the Morula Fertility Clinic, which has since been renamed Morula IVF Jakarta. It has become one of the largest fertility clinics in Indonesia, with an increasing number of patients participating in IVF programs every year, experiencing an average annual growth rate of 30%.

Recognizing the high demand for well-standardized fertility programs with successful outcomes, Bundamedik Healthcare System is committed to continually expanding the Morula IVF clinics in Indonesia under the umbrella of 'Morula IVF Indonesia.' To date, there are 10 Morula IVF clinics (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), along with the development of the new Bunda Morula Nusa Dua facility.



Cancer Truth Hurts: A Loved One Has Cancer. Do I Tell the Truth?



Patients are frequently shielded from critical medical information, leaving them unprepared for the inevitability of death.

Discussing cancer with a loved one can be complex, especially when revealing the diagnosis. We may consider withholding the truth due to concerns about their emotional well-being, fear of depression, loss of motivation, or viewing the diagnosis negatively. These actions stem from a desire to protect, but hiding the truth can be more harmful in the end.

Myth or Fact: "If left unspoken, he/she remains unaware"

A cancer diagnosis often brings about emotional and psychological shifts in both the patient and their family, impacting communication dynamics. Concealing this news may result in noticeable changes in how family members interact with the patient. For example, when the patient asks about physical changes they've observed, family members might deflect the question or redirect the conversation. In some cases, the patient might become aware of whispered discussions within the family.

Cancer typically presents noticeable symptoms and physical changes in the patient, such as weight loss, pain, fatigue, or other signs that raise concerns about a severe health issue. Some individuals are highly attuned to their bodies and can sense that something is wrong, even without explicit information. They may pick up on cues hinting at a cancer diagnosis.

During medical appointments or treatments, interactions with other patients may inadvertently reveal the diagnosis. Patients often exchange information and support one another, and a perceptive listener may detect hints pointing to a cancer diagnosis. Additionally, details like the clinic's name, the nature of medical appointments, and overheard discussions in healthcare settings can strongly imply a cancer diagnosis.

As a result of perceived secrecy or manipulation of information about the cancer diagnosis and prognosis, attempts to disguise the purpose of medical visits may become increasingly challenging over time, leading to growing distrust.

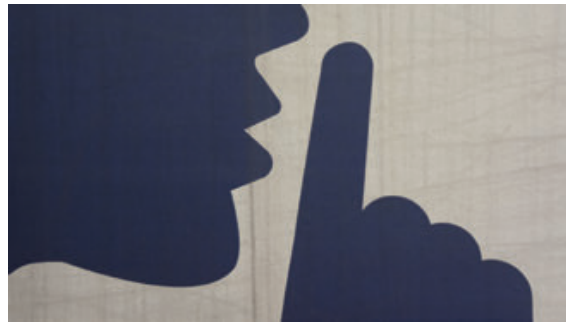


“How does keeping secret affect the him/her?”

Keeping such information hidden can lead to isolation, fear, and confusion for cancer patients. The lack of awareness about their condition can make them turn to friends and online sources, potentially leading to misinformation. Without accurate information, patients may imagine the worst, increasing their anxiety and distress.

Patients are frequently shielded from critical medical information, leaving them unprepared for the inevitability of death. Simultaneously, family members often make the deliberate choice to withhold these details, believing it to be an act of love and protection, aligning with their sense of duty to preserve the patient’s emotional well-being and hope for recovery. Moreover, disagreements among family members regarding treatment choices can contribute to the decision to maintain this secrecy. This burden of preserving such a significant secret can generate feelings of remorse, intensifying the grief experienced by the family.

After the loss, those involved in keeping this secret may grapple with regret, pondering the “what-if” scenarios. The weight of guilt for not being completely



transparent with their loved one can be profound, as it potentially deprives the patient of the chance to plan for the future, express their preferences, and engage in decision-making for themselves. This complexity adds an additional layer of difficulty for family members when it comes to making decisions. The absence of guidance further complicates the decision-making process, especially when family members have differing opinions, making it even more challenging and emotionally taxing for the family.

In summary, concealing a cancer diagnosis can harm patients and their families.

Key points:

1. Secrecy can make patients feel suspicious, and their symptoms may reveal the diagnosis inadvertently.
2. Keeping the diagnosis hidden increases isolation and anxiety, leading to misinformation.
3. Excluding the patient from critical discussions can make family members feel guilty and complicate the grieving process. The absence of patient guidance in decision-making adds emotional strain, particularly when family members have differing opinions. ■

Our Clinic Locations

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820 Thomson Rd #08-
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OncoCare Women’s Cancer Clinic
38 Irrawaddy Road
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Novena Hospital) #06-
22/23 Mount Elizabeth
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258500
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Gleneagles
6A Napier Road #02-
17/18/19 Gleneagles
Medical Centre
Singapore 258499
Tel: +65 6733 7890

Mount Elizabeth Novena Level 9
38 Irrawaddy Road
(Mount Elizabeth
Novena Hospital) #09-
59/60/61/62/63 Mount
Elizabeth Novena
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329563
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Southeast Asia offers life science companies significant opportunities in the medical tourism sector

New report highlights business potential from growing healthcare travel

Life sciences companies in the public and private sectors could reap financial benefits from the growing medical tourism sector in Southeast Asia, according to a report by healthcare consultancy IQVIA.

The region has already established itself as a popular medical tourism destination for patients seeking affordable and high-quality healthcare, and its growth trajectory offers a promising market for healthcare businesses. One reason is that several regional governments have identified medical tourism as a national development priority.

“We strongly recommend that companies thoroughly investigate the market opportunities and regulatory requirements for launching new, innovative medical products in medical tourism destinations such as Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, and the up-and-coming destination Indonesia,” noted the report.

The demand is particularly high for cell and gene therapies as well as precision oncology treatments. Therapeutic products in fields popular among international patients are also promising, such as cardiology orthopaedics, and cosmetic surgery.

Health authorities from several countries are developing regulations that should provide a clear path to bring new medical products to market. Streamlined procedures in specific areas promise easier access for medical therapies, such as in the Sanur Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Bali.

“The Sanur SEZ could potentially allow companies to import unapproved therapeutic products and medical devices into the area for early patients access, subject to permission from BPOM, the national food and drug supervisory agency of Indonesia,” said the report.

South Korean airline and university launch partnership to boost health travel

Agreement offers discounts for international patients

Asiana Airlines and Korea University Anam Hospital have signed a memorandum of understanding that will offer flight discounts and an additional free checked piece of baggage for international patients checking in at the hospital, *The Chosun Daily* reported.

Discounts will range from five to 15 percent. The hospital is also offering reduced rates, with examination fees slashed from 756,000 won (US\$574) to 600,000 won (US\$456). Patients will also benefit from a 20 percent discount on any additional tests.

The hospital has about 1,000 beds and is applying for the Joint Commission International certification, the gold standard in the field. It offers consultations in multiple languages, including English, Russian, and Mongolian, and can assist international patients with accommodations, visa applications, and airport transportation. Its departments cover all the main medical specialties, including cardiology, orthopaedics, oncology, and plastic surgery. It also boasts specialised centres in diabetes, cell therapy, and organ transplant.

“We hope that this collaboration will serve as a catalyst for revitalizing the medical tourism industry, which has experienced a downturn following the COVID-19 pandemic,” said an official from Asiana Airlines, according to the report.





Medical tourist death prompts UK government to seek improved regulations

The UK and Turkey will discuss better safety standards

The British government said it would meet with its Turkish counterparts to discuss medical tourism regulations after a series of deaths involving British citizens who sought care in Turkey, the BBC reported last November.

The need for talks was sparked by the unfortunate case of Melissa Kerr, a 31-year-old woman who died in Istanbul in 2019 after undergoing Brazilian butt-lift surgery, a cosmetic procedure that involves injecting the patient's fat into the buttocks and can have a higher mortality rate than other cosmetic procedures.

Eight other British patients have also died in Turkey after weight-loss procedures, according to the BBC, while coroner Jacqueline Lake said Kerr had not received accurate information to make an informed decision. This is contested by the clinic where she had the surgery, which said that "Kerr signed several consent forms confirming she understood the risks."

The reason the procedure can be deadly is due to the risk that injected fat can enter the blood stream through the buttocks which are full of blood vessels. If that happens, major vessels can be clogged, leading to death.

After a four-year moratorium on performing the procedure in order to collect evidence about its risks, the British Association of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons announced that the surgery could be safely carried out only if the injection was done in the area under the skin, while an intraoperative ultrasound would also need to be used to visualise tissues and ensure fat didn't reach the muscle layer.

British Health minister Maria Caulfield told the BBC that regulatory standards in other countries might not match those in the UK but that "such transparency and standardisation are important to reduce potential risks to patients."

Global tourism is roaring back after the pandemic

Most regions are close to or have surpassed pre-pandemic tourism arrivals

International tourism was on track to reach almost its pre-pandemic levels, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) said in November, adding that about 975 million tourists travelled around the world between January and September 2023, a 38 percent surge compared to the same period in 2022.

Similarly, the latest data show that international tourist arrivals reached 92 percent of pre-pandemic levels in July, the best month since the pandemic, while tourism overall recovered 87 percent of pre-pandemic levels in January through September.

"The latest UNWTO data shows that international tourism has almost completely recovered from the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 with many destinations reaching or even exceeding pre-pandemic arrivals and receipts. This is critical for destinations, businesses, and communities where the sector is a major lifeline," UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili said in a press release.

The recovery was driven by the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The Middle East was the best performing region, with arrivals already 20 percent higher than before the pandemic in the first nine months of 2023, making it the only region to outperform 2019 numbers. Europe received the highest number of travellers, with 550 million tourists or 56 percent of the global total choosing European countries for their holidays. Africa managed to recover 92 percent of the tourists who travelled there before the pandemic broke out.

The Asia and Pacific region only recorded a 62 percent recovery due to its slower reopening to international travel but with significant variations. South Asia, for example, welcomed 95 percent of its pre-pandemic travellers, while Northeast Asia saw only about 50 percent.



The loo dilemma

Should we use paper towels or hand dryers?



In one of his hilarious rants, *Big Bang Theory* sitcom character Sheldon Cooper lectures his friends about the health risks of using hot air blowers to dry hands in public restrooms, calling them incubators of bacteria. While in the widely popular comedy show Sheldon is well known for making a big fuss about trivial matters, in this case he might have been on to something.

Some research has found that electric hand dryers can spread germs and potentially reduce the benefits of hand washing, an indispensable practice for minimising the spread of infectious diseases like influenza and COVID-19.

"We often say handwashing is the key to preventing the spread of illness," Dr Daniel Allan, a family medicine physician at the Cleveland Clinic, said on the clinic's website. "But wet hands increase the risk of transmitting bacteria, so drying is an equally important step in prevention."

A study published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* reviewed the research on the hygiene of different hand-drying methods and concluded that, "from a hygiene standpoint, paper towels are superior to air dryers" and "should be recommended in locations where hygiene is paramount, such as hospitals and clinics" because they remove bacteria effectively. But the authors acknowledged they found little agreement on the effectiveness of electric air dryers.

Though several other studies have also found that

electric dryers can spread germs, critics point out some of them were funded by the paper towel industry. In addition, other research funded by Dyson, one of the biggest producers of electric hand dryers, reached the opposite conclusion — the company's jet air dryer left less bacteria on the hands of the study participants than paper towels.

Despite the lack of firm evidence to settle the issue, some experts stress that washing hands properly is paramount and could make the choice between toilet paper and dryers less relevant. "Good hand washing practice is the key issue for me here above anything else," said Catherine Makison Booth, a technical officer in biosafety and biosecurity at the World Health Organization, according to Vox.

Unfortunately, good hand washing practices are hardly the norm in many public restrooms, with surveys suggesting that many people don't wash their hands properly. "They don't use soap, just a bit of water," Keith Redway, Emeritus Fellow at the University of Westminster and author of several pro-towel studies, told the *Guardian*. If they then use an electric hand dryer, "whatever's left on their hands, which could be fecal material if they haven't washed them properly, is blown everywhere."

The bottom line is, when using a public restroom, wash your hands thoroughly as this will help reduce the spread of infectious diseases no matter how you dry your hands.

Washing hands properly is paramount and could make the choice between toilet paper and dryers less relevant



Are peanuts healthy?

They can provide several benefits if consumed without unhealthy additives

Food experts often tout the health benefits of nuts like almonds or walnuts, but since peanuts aren't, strictly speaking, in the nut category, people may wonder if they can also play a role in a healthy diet. The short answer is a resounding "yes".

Unlike other nuts, peanuts grow underground and are therefore considered legumes. However, they share many nutritional similarities with nuts. For example, they're also a good source of beneficial nutrients like plant-based proteins, healthy fats, and fibres.

The monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats in peanuts, for instance, can help lower bad cholesterol while raising good cholesterol and controlling blood sugar levels, which in turn can lower the risk of heart disease and diabetes. Fibres can facilitate bowel movements, preventing constipation and improving colorectal health. Similarly, eating a diet high in plant-based proteins is associated with a reduced risk of death from several chronic diseases.

One international study conducted in the US and China found that people who ate nuts or peanuts were less likely to die from any cause, in particular heart disease, compared to those who didn't eat nuts. In the US participants who regularly ate peanuts, the decrease in the mortality rate stood at 21 percent, while those in China saw a 17 percent reduction.

"Nut consumption was associated with decreased overall and cardiovascular disease mortality across different ethnic groups and among individuals from low SES [socioeconomic status] groups. Consumption of nuts, particularly peanuts given their general affordability, may be considered a cost-effective measure to improve cardiovascular health," the authors

wrote in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

One thing to remember is that not all peanuts have the same health potential as some come with unhealthy add-ons, so checking ingredient labels is a good practice to reap the benefits of peanuts. "Unfortunately, the cheapest peanuts are often salted, dry roasted or coated. The salt in these will undo the health benefits of the nuts," Victoria Taylor, senior dietitian at the British Heart Foundation, said on its website.

The same is true for peanut butter, another common way peanuts are consumed worldwide, as it can improve one's diet when eaten without unhealthy additives. "Some brands add sugar, molasses, vegetable oils and even corn syrup, [which] basically minimize the health value," Keri Gans, a dietitian nutritionist in New York, told *Health*.

Another positive of peanut butter is that it can make people feel fuller due to its high protein and fibre content. "Sometimes peanut butter gets a bad [reputation] because of its fat content, but fat is an essential component to feeling satisfaction," Laura Lu, a registered dietitian in New York explained to *Health*. "This means that having pretzels or fruit with peanut butter can help you feel fuller longer than if you were to just eat the pretzels or fruit by itself."

However, there are also potential drawbacks to peanuts as they can trigger allergies in some people, resulting in skin reactions, itching, difficulty breathing, and digestive problems. In the worst cases, the allergic reaction can lead to anaphylaxis, a life-threatening condition that requires emergency care.

Those not allergic to nuts should consider adding healthy peanuts to their diets.

The health potential of learning languages

Speaking more than one language might strengthen the brain and even delay dementia, but more evidence of the link is needed



In today's globalised world, many are learning foreign languages to improve career prospects, facilitate communication, or just out of interest. But the mental efforts needed to learn a new language, such as memorising new sounds and vocabulary, might also boost brain health and even slow down the development of Alzheimer's.

Research findings published last April show that people who use two languages daily in their early life have better learning and memory skills in older adulthood than those speaking a single language. They also enjoy long-lasting protection against cognitive decline and dementia, an umbrella term referring to cognitive impairment, including Alzheimer's.

Researchers recruited 746 people aged 59 to 76 who either experienced confusion and memory loss or didn't and tested their skills on vocabulary, memory, attention, and calculation tasks. Participants who reported being bilingual between the ages of 13 and 30 or 30 and 65 performed better than their monolingual peers.

"It's promising that they report that early and middle-life bilingualism has a beneficial effect on cognitive health in later life," Miguel Arce Rentería, a neuropsychologist at Columbia University who was not involved in the study, told the *New York Times*. "This would line up with the existing literature."

Previous studies have similarly suggested bilingualism could offer people who eventually develop dementia more healthy years as it delays the onset of the debilitating condition by as much as five to seven years compared to those with dementia who speak only one language. Tamar Gollan of the University of California San Diego Alzheimer's Disease Research Center explained to CNN that bilingualism didn't

actually prevent Alzheimer's disease or brain damage associated with it. "What it does is it makes you continue to function, even in the face of having damage to the brain. You can imagine an athlete with an injury crossing the finish line, even though they're injured."

These benefits could be related to the efforts needed to speak multiple languages, which are believed to strengthen the brain and make it more resilient.

"Being bilingual involves handling a wider range of options in terms of both language and culture, being able to direct attention, managing a mental map, and so on. Depending on ability and experience, this can both demand and provide greater cognitive resources," Miquel Serra, a consultant in bioethics at the University of Barcelona, wrote in *The Conversation*.

Experts agree that keeping the brain active, especially as people age, may be what's providing protection against cognitive decline and can be achieved through a variety of mental activities, like socialising and reading, though a clear association has not been established.

This caveat may also be true for speaking multiple languages as other research has found no convincing health benefits from it. "The question of whether bilingualism can protect against Alzheimer's has been in the limelight for some time, and even today the extent to which it might be effective in combating cognitive decline is a topic of debate," wrote Serra.

As a result, some experts caution that the health benefits observed in the studies may be due to reasons other than speaking two languages, such as the specific population or lifestyles of the people who happen to be bilingual, reported the *New York Times*.

Being bilingual involves handling a wider range of options in terms of both language and culture

How and when to exercise after pregnancy

Women should start exercising gradually after delivery, but timing varies from woman to woman

Giving birth puts women under both physical and mental stress that can require some time to get back to daily routines, but exercise can play an important role in improving the health of new moms.

Post-pregnancy, the body needs to rest and heal, but physical activity can help strengthen the abdominal and pelvic muscles used during pregnancy and childbirth while also increasing energy levels and relieving stress as well as improving cardiovascular fitness and sleep.

“You may be eager and motivated to get started as soon as possible, but it’s best to resume exercising gradually, and only after getting the okay from your obstetrician,” Dr Anupriya Agarwal, an obstetrician and gynaecologist, wrote on the website of Mount Elizabeth Hospital. “The ideal time to get started will also depend on how your child was delivered and if there were any complications during the process.”

She added that women who had normal vaginal deliveries might start physical activity about four weeks after giving birth, while those who had a caesarean section, experienced complications, or had extensive vaginal tears should usually wait longer. But a good practice is to ask doctors for advice on the best time and ways to resume working out as each woman recovers differently, with some being fit enough to start exercising sooner.

“Each woman has her own unique recovery span,” explains Catherine Cram, MS, co-author of *Exercising Through Your Pregnancy* (Addicus Books, 2012) and creator of the Prenatal and Postpartum Exercise Design

course for DSWFitness, on the blog of the National Academy of Sports Medicine. “Her body’s signals should determine when to start exercising.”

Dr Agarwal recommends starting with gentle movements in the first few days as the body is more prone to injury due to the stress of giving birth. Walking is a simple but good starting point for women who want to exercise after pregnancy. Over time, pelvic floor and abdominal strengthening exercises, as well as postnatal yoga, are also viable options to tone muscles and avoid belly bulging.

Abdominal strength can also be increased by learning how to exhale upon exertion in daily activities, Marianne Ryan, a physical therapist in the US, told the *New York Times*. “If you’re passing a bowel movement, try to support your tummy with your hands and also exhale as you’re passing it,” she said.

One tip for exercising on a regular basis is to add physical activity to daily life routines, like using the stairs instead of the lift or walking instead of taking the car, the UK National Health Service recommends. Swimming is also a good and relaxing form of exercise, but women should wait until seven days after postnatal bleeding has stopped.

A good target is to stay active for 20 to 30 minutes a day, according to The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, but even 10 minutes of exercise can be beneficial

To reduce risks, women should listen to their bodies and stop exercising if they feel any pain, bleeding, or discomfort

Women who had normal vaginal deliveries might start physical activity about four weeks after giving birth.



Rising risks of Hypertension among younger generation

by Dr Ganapathi Palaniappan, Cardiologist.



The data from Malaysia National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015 for overall population shows the prevalence of hypertension in Malaysian adult population of above 40 years old is 35.3%, and of these, only 37.5% are aware that they have hypertension, only 31.1% are treated and only 37.4% of those treated are controlled well on treatment. This emphasises that the diagnosis and treatment for hypertension is significantly undermined.

In addition to that, hypertension is becoming more common among the younger generation due to the rise in sedentary lifestyles, poor eating habits, and increased stress levels. A recent study from Yi Yi Khoo et al. published in 2021 shows that the prevalence of hypertension among young adults in Malaysia in 2006 is around 17.7% and increased to 18.4% in 2015.

Hypertension, commonly known as high blood pressure, occurs when the force of blood against the walls of your arteries is consistently too high. It's often referred to as a "silent killer" because it usually does not cause noticeable symptoms but can lead to serious health problems if left untreated.

Hypertension can be caused by a combination of multiple factors such as genetics, poor diet (high in salt, saturated fats, and low in fibre), lack of physical activity, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking and stress. In the younger generation, lifestyle factors such as unhealthy eating habits, sedentary lifestyles, and stress from studies or work can contribute.

Hypertension is often asymptomatic. However, some individuals may experience symptoms such as headache, shortness of breath, dizziness or even nosebleeds. Diagnosis is typically done through blood pressure measurements. Young adults who are suspected to have hypertension should have their blood pressure regularly checked and if consistently high, further tests might be needed to determine potential underlying causes. Thus, health screening is utmost important.

The risk factors include family history with hypertension, obesity, smoking, excessive alcohol intake and a high-sodium diet. Younger individuals

with poor lifestyle habits are more prone to developing hypertension.

Hypertension typically does not manifest visibly in appearance. However, people with severe hypertension might have physical signs like bloodshot eyes or a flushed face during hypertensive crises.

Prevention is always better than curative therapy. According to Dr Gana, lifestyle modification plays a crucial role in preventing hypertension. Young adults are encouraged to maintain a balanced diet, engage in regular physical activity, manage stress through relaxation techniques, limit alcohol consumption, avoid smoking, and maintain a healthy weight.

Hypertension is manageable but may not always be completely curable. It can be controlled with lifestyle changes and medications but lifelong management is necessary. Untreated hypertension can lead to serious complications such as heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, vision problems and an increased risk of aneurysms. An aneurysm is the enlargement of an artery caused by weakness in the arterial wall. Ultimately, these can lead to further complications such as death.

When patients present to the doctor, first and foremost, the secondary causes of hypertension need to be ruled out. Once ruled out, treatment usually involves lifestyle modifications such as dietary changes, exercise, stress reduction and medications to manage the symptoms. The approach depends on the severity of hypertension and the individual's overall health.

At IJN, we provide a comprehensive approach to managing hypertension that encompasses every aspect of your health journey. Our dedicated team of specialists offers personalized consultations tailored to your unique needs. From expert guidance by our skilled cardiologists to invaluable dietary insights provided by our experienced dietitians, we ensure a well-rounded strategy for hypertension management. Our physiotherapists are on hand to recommend suitable exercise routines that align with your lifestyle and health goals.

Should the need arise, our team is well-equipped to initiate the most effective guideline-directed therapies available. We also prioritize your overall well-being by conducting thorough screenings to assess potential damage to other vital organs, ensuring a proactive and comprehensive treatment plan. At IJN, your journey to managing hypertension is supported by a multidisciplinary team dedicated to enhancing your cardiovascular health and improving your quality of life.

While hypertension may not be entirely reversible, it can often be effectively managed and controlled through lifestyle changes and prompt treatments.

To access IJN services, individuals can usually schedule appointments through the website at www.ijn.com.my or contact us at 03-2617 8200.



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New guidelines aim for better treatment of chronic low back pain

Recommendations tackle the most common cause of disability in the world

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched its first guidelines for the care of patients with long-term low back pain with the aim of providing useful advice for health workers on the key dos and don'ts of treating the condition.

Low back pain is the main cause of disability worldwide, according to the WHO, with about one in 13 people suffering from it in 2020, or 619 million people. Since 1990, the number of cases has risen by 60 percent and is projected to reach about 843 million in 2050 due to growing populations in Asia and Africa who live longer.

Those who experience pain regularly can have a poor quality of life, making it hard to participate in social activities and be productive at work, which can in turn lead to psychological problems. Lower back pain is also associated with other diseases and a higher risk of death. In addition, people who suffer from the condition in the long term are more likely to face poverty, lose their jobs, and have less wealth for retirement, especially the elderly.

"To achieve universal health coverage, the issue of low back pain cannot be ignored, as it is the leading cause of disability globally," Dr Bruce Aylward, WHO Assistant Director-General, Universal Health Coverage, Life Course, said in a press release. "Countries can address this ubiquitous but often-overlooked challenge by incorporating key, achievable interventions, as they strengthen their approaches to primary health care."

These include education programmes to expand knowledge of low back pain and teach self-care strategies and exercise programmes that support

the use of physical therapy like spinal manipulative therapy and massage, psychological therapies such as cognitive behavioural therapy, and medications like non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

The guidelines recommend a holistic and person-centred approach that takes into consideration different physical, psychological, and social aspects as these all contribute to the experience of chronic low back pain. This means that several interventions are likely to be required to manage the condition instead of a single treatment.

"Addressing chronic low back pain requires an integrated, person-centred approach. This means considering each person's unique situation and the factors that might influence their pain experience," Dr Anshu Banerjee, WHO Director for Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Ageing, said in the press release. "We are using this guideline as a tool to support a holistic approach to chronic low back pain care and to improve the quality, safety and availability of care."

The guidelines also advise against using certain approaches in most cases, meaning that they should not be offered as standard treatment because their risks are higher than their benefits. These include lumbar braces, belts, and supports; physical therapies like traction (i.e., pulling on part of the body); and medicines like opioid pain killers that can lead to overdose and addiction.

The WHO recommends countries integrate the new guidelines into their universal health coverage while also raising awareness about the proper care for low back pain through public health campaigns.

Addressing chronic low back pain requires an integrated, person-centred approach

Childbirth causes long-lasting health problems in many women

More data and awareness about long-term health problems are needed to help women after pregnancy

New research shows that every year at least 40 million women could be suffering from childbirth-related health problems that persist in the long term, shedding light on some of the little-researched side effects of giving birth that are mistakenly considered uncommon.

The researchers acknowledge that over the last decades significant strides have been made to reduce maternal mortality worldwide, but much less attention has been paid to the difficulties women may experience months or years after pregnancy. For example, pain during sex (dyspareunia) and low back pain are estimated to occur in about one third of cases, while anal and urinary incontinence and fear of childbirth, as well as secondary infertility, anxiety, and depression, can also reach double digit percentages.

They also found a lack of effective guidelines to support treatment for about 40 percent of the 32 priority conditions taken into consideration in their study. But this neglect is also due to the fact that postnatal care is usually available for women only during the six weeks after pregnancy, meaning that problems experienced afterwards can slip through the cracks.

The study is part of a broader series titled Maternal health in the perinatal period and beyond. Its opening paper stressed that a holistic approach was paramount to reduce maternal mortality, one that focused not only on the medical causes driving childbirth-related deaths but also on racial and gender inequities, economic

factors, nutrition, sanitation, and environmental risks.

As a result, the study authors call for a more comprehensive approach to the health of women who give birth over the course of their life.

“Maternal health is not just something that we should start worrying about when the pregnancy bump appears,” Dr Joao Paulo Souza, Director of the Latin American and Caribbean Center on Health Sciences Information (BIREME) for PAHO/WHO and one of the authors of the study, said in a press release. “There are many factors that influence the likelihood a woman will have a healthy pregnancy, from the environment around her to the political and economic systems she lives in, to access to nutritious food and the level of agency she has over her life – all of these factors need to be addressed to improve her health, alongside access to high quality healthcare throughout life.”

The authors recommend that policymakers focus on which part of the health service is or should be dedicated to childbirth-related problems, the extension and optimisation of postnatal care to better identify and treat such conditions, and support the voices of women and patient groups raising awareness about these issues.

“Greater investment is needed in epidemiological, interventional, and implementation research, as well as evidence-based guidelines for these conditions, to drive positive change,” they wrote in *The Lancet Global Health*.

Maternal health is not just something that we should start worrying about when the pregnancy bump appears



Poverty may triple the risk for early dementia

Raising the socioeconomic status of the poor can help reduce incidence of the condition

Swathes of medical research have shown that health, or the lack of it, isn't simply a matter of good genes and healthy lifestyles but is strongly related to social rank and financial means. A new study has offered additional evidence of this link in one of the most dreaded chronic diseases in our communities — dementia, a group of disabling conditions that slowly eats away at our memory and mental capacity.

Researchers from the Huanzhong University of Science and Technology in China analysed UK Biobank data related to more than 440,000 people aged between 37 and 73 and found that those from lower socio-economic backgrounds were more than three times as likely to develop early-onset dementia compared to more affluent groups. The association with socioeconomic factors, however, was not as stark for late-onset dementia. Early-onset dementia happens when people develop it before turning 65.

The analysis included data related to the participants' income, education, and employment but also looked at several factors well known for affecting health, such as smoking, alcohol intake, physical activity, and diet.

The researchers concluded that only a small percentage of the association with socioeconomic factors, less than 12 percent, could be attributed to lifestyle differences, meaning that people in lower socio-economic groups are at a greater risk of developing early dementia even if they have a healthy lifestyle.

"Therefore, relying solely on promoting healthy lifestyles might not substantially reduce the

socioeconomic inequity in early-onset dementia and late-onset dementia risk without considering other social determinants of health. Our findings argue for social and fiscal policies that reduce socioeconomic inequity," the authors wrote in the *Lancet Healthy Longevity*.

They added that those most at risk of early dementia were low-income people who had unhealthy lifestyles as they faced a 440 percent increased risk compared to high-income individuals who had healthy lifestyles.

Currently, more than 55 million people in the world are affected by dementia, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), with roughly 10 million new cases diagnosed every year. When the disease reaches advanced stages, people are often unable to take care of themselves because they can forget things and events, get lost when outside their homes, or have difficulty performing daily tasks. This explains why dementia is not only the seventh leading cause of death but also a major cause of disability and dependency among the elderly worldwide.

Recognising dementia as a public health priority, in 2017 the WHO launched the *Global action plan on the public health response to dementia 2017-2025*. This blueprint offers countries a range of guidelines for addressing the challenge of dementia, including how to increase awareness about its risks, create a dementia-inclusive society, and improve diagnosis and treatment. It also aims to improve support for dementia carers, often the patient's family members, whose physical and mental health can be affected by the strain of care giving.

Currently, more than 55 million people in the world are affected by dementia



Oculoplastic Surgery: More than meets the eye



1) What is an Oculoplastic Surgeon:

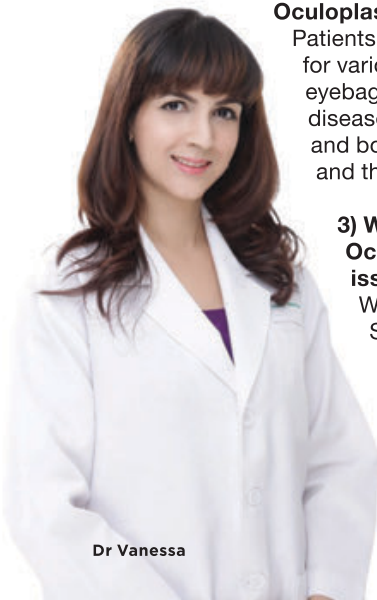
Oculoplastic Surgeons are Ophthalmologist (Eye Specialist) who undergo advanced training in plastic and reconstructive surgery to operate around the delicate area of the eyes. A dual trained surgeon who combines the precision of ophthalmic microsurgery with the aesthetic aspect of plastic surgery.

2) For what kind of conditions do I need to see an Oculoplastic Surgeon:

Patients generally see an Oculoplastic Surgeon for various Eyelid conditions (droopy eyelids, eyebags), problems of the tear passages, diseases of the orbit (which is the soft tissue and bones around the eye), cancer of the eye and the surrounding structures.

3) Why is it important to see a qualified Oculoplastic Surgeon for the above issues?

When you see a qualified Oculoplastic Surgeon, you have the advantage of having our focused approach as well as a greater familiarity with the anatomy and how everything works together in the eye area. They have good experience and expertise in performing these delicate eyelid surgeries for better cosmetic and functional outcomes



Dr Vanessa

4) Why is Oculoplastic surgery gaining importance?

The eyes are the window to the soul. With the advent of modernization, social media and increased connectivity, more and more people are becoming consciously aware of their looks. As such individuals tend to seek professional help to overcome problems with this area of the face. Sometimes it could be purely for cosmetic reasons and sometimes disease related conditions such as trauma or cancers in the periocular region

5) What are the common cosmetic eyelid surgeries performed?

Common Cosmetic Eyelid Surgeries include eyelid lift for droopy eyelids, Lid crease formation (double eyelid formation), eyebags or eyebrow lifting.

6) Will my eyebags come back after surgery?

Generally, the results of eye bag surgery are long lasting for many years

7) Do I need to be hospitalized overnight for cosmetic eyelid surgeries?

Cosmetic eyelid surgeries are minor procedures done under local anaesthesia done as day care or out-patient. Patients do not need overnight hospitalization

8) Are eye/ eyelid cancers common?

Eye and eyelid cancers are not common in the Asian population. However, if one notices a growth or abnormal mass in the eye ball or eyelids it is best to seek professional help immediately.

9) What is double eyelid surgery?

Many East Asians are born without a lid fold which is called a monolid. Presence of a fold on the upper eyelid makes the eyes appear bigger and brighter. Hence, lid crease formation surgery is a common procedure done among East Asians

10) What are the ways to form lid crease?

Lid crease can be formed by placing sutures on the eyelid or surgical incision method. Both have their own advantages and during consultation the Oculoplastic Surgeon can advise you what best suits you.

11) What is the most satisfying part of your job of being an Ophthalmologist and Oculoplastic Surgeon

As an Ophthalmologist we can treat and cure blinding conditions such as cataract and give the patient the gift of sight which is gratifying. As an Oculoplastic Surgeon we can treat life threatening conditions such as cancers. The cosmetic part of our profession gives us the joy of making a person look better thus boosting his/her confidence. ■

Large Indian study confirms air pollution raises risk of diabetes

Findings suggest cleaner air could reduce high incidence of the chronic disease

Breathing polluted air is associated with an increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes, according to a new study conducted in two Indian metropolises, Delhi and Chennai, plugging an important research gap as most previous studies were conducted in developed countries with less air pollution.

Researchers analysed a group of about 12,000 people, measuring their blood sugar levels and air pollution data from their locations over the course of seven years. It is well known that type 2 diabetes increases the amount of glucose, or sugar, in the blood which can potentially lead to serious health risks, including heart disease, vision loss, kidney problems, and stroke. The study results showed that every 10 µg/m³ increase in the yearly average of PM_{2.5} — a widespread pollutant made of tiny particles that can enter the body through the lungs and affect all major organs — led to elevated blood sugar levels and a 22 percent surge in the risk for diabetes.

These findings are particularly significant in India, the eighth most polluted country in the world in 2022, according to IQAir, with an average PM_{2.5} concentration more than 50 times higher than the threshold recommended by the World Health Organization (between 0 and 5 µg/m³). The country is also plagued by a high diabetes incidence. A study published last June in *The Lancet Diabetes*

& Endocrinology estimated that about 100 million Indians have the condition, while roughly 136 million are believed to have prediabetes, or high blood sugar levels that are likely to lead to the condition in the future.

“Until now, we had assumed that diet, obesity and physical exercise were some of the factors explaining why urban Indians had higher prevalence of diabetes than rural Indians,” said Dr V Mohan, chairman of the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation and one of the authors of the paper, according to *The Guardian*. “This study is an eye-opener because now we have found a new cause for diabetes that is pollution.”

One hypothesis to explain the findings is that air pollution might cause chronic inflammation and oxidative stress, leading to insulin resistance, the researchers wrote in *BMJ*. Insulin is a hormone that regulates blood sugar levels, but in some cases the body can grow resistant to it, meaning that it doesn't take up glucose from the blood as it normally should.

The study authors told *The Guardian* their findings offer some hope as they suggest reducing air pollution could contribute to a lowering of diabetes cases and improve the health of Indian people across the board. Air pollution has dramatic detrimental effects on human health, with outdoor particulate matter playing a role in the development of common deadly conditions, including strokes, heart disease, lung cancer, and acute and chronic respiratory diseases.

Until now, we had assumed that diet, obesity and physical exercise were some of the factors explaining why urban Indians had higher prevalence of diabetes than rural Indians





Cancer Care at Island Hospital is now recognized as an international Centre of Excellence (CoE) by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS).

Kudos to the team for achieving another milestone in our commitment to person-centred care.



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To Comfort Always

Saving vision for billions through prevention and early treatment

Improved medical services and greater awareness will go a long way in strengthening global eye health

Regular eye check-ups could have detected elevated intraocular [inside the eyes] pressure and the early signs of glaucoma, allowing for timely intervention.

Alex is a 10-year-old student in Kuala Lumpur who spends most of his time studying and reading. He sits in the front row at school to better follow his teachers but rarely engages in outdoor activities.

His lifestyle offers clues as to why he has never complained of any vision problems despite suffering from a serious case of nearsightedness where people are only able to see clearly objects close to them.

“He’s a bookish child who prefers indoor activities requiring close-range vision, which may explain his lack of complaints about nearsightedness symptoms,” Dr Anhar Hafiz Bin Silim, a consultant ophthalmologist at Optimax Eye Specialist and Alex’s doctor, told *Global Health Asia-Pacific*.

His case is an unfortunate illustration of the significant lack of awareness about eye health that contributes to many instances of preventable vision loss worldwide. Alex was lucky because his condition was diagnosed during a general eye screening at school, preventing him from having serious consequences, but many others aren’t so fortunate.

In another case, this one not so lucky as Alex, a retiree named Jeya in the Malaysian state of Selangor had been going about his business for many years without any eye discomfort or problems until he suddenly experienced side vision loss. By that time, the damage was already irreversible. The culprit was glaucoma, a sneaky condition that in the early stages doesn’t show any appreciable symptoms but over time can result in patients losing the ability to see things off to their side. If left untreated, it can lead to blindness by damaging the optic nerve responsible for sending vision signals to the brain. In most cases, this damage happens because of increased pressure in the eye caused by fluid build-up.

“Regular eye check-ups could have detected elevated intraocular [inside the eyes] pressure and the early signs of glaucoma, allowing for timely intervention,” stressed Dr Hafiz, who also treated Jeya.

In many cases, glaucoma can be effectively treated

with daily eyedrops that sometimes are prescribed for life. These can usually keep the condition under check, but if they can’t, other treatments are required, such as laser therapy or minimally invasive surgery. Though treatments are often effective, many people are diagnosed too late or not at all.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least one billion people have a near or distance vision problem that could have been prevented or is still not addressed but could be easily solved with spectacles or surgery. Presbyopia, a refractive error resulting in the inability to focus on nearby objects, is the main cause of near vision loss (826 million), while the most common conditions leading to distance vision impairment include cataracts (94 million), refractive errors (88.4 million), age-related macular degeneration (8 million), glaucoma (7.7 million), and diabetic retinopathy (3.9 million).

Vision impairment can have devastating consequences. Children may experience delayed language, social, and cognitive development as well as lower educational achievements than their peers without vision problems. Adults can struggle to find and hold down a job while being at greater risk of psychological problems like depression and anxiety. In the elderly, vision impairment can lead to social isolation, difficulty walking, and a higher risk of falls and fractures.

To help people better detect possible vision problems and urge them to go for screening, last October the WHO launched WHOeyes, a free application to check the eyes and learn how to protect them. The app checks how well the eyes are able to recognise shapes and details at a certain distance, which is a standard method for measuring vision ability.

“The WHOeyes app can help people quickly and easily identify potential vision issues that merit further checking by a qualified professional,” Dr Bente Mikkelsen, WHO Director for Noncommunicable Diseases, said in a press release. “We decided to



Over the last several years the Southeast Asian nation had made great strides in improving eye health but there were still significant gaps to plug, especially in more rural areas.

share this simple eye test and quick tips for eye care on an app, as people use their phones daily, and many people are unaware that they have a vision problem until it is too late.”

Such poor awareness is rife across countries, though there are huge variations. The vast majority of people with vision impairment live in low-and-middle-income countries where there’s a higher prevalence of unaddressed cataract and refractive errors mostly due to limited access to eye care services. By contrast, high-income countries with older populations are plagued by higher rates of glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD) as these are more common in the elderly.

Malaysia may be unusual as it has a fair share of both problems. “Malaysia faces a mixed scenario, dealing with both traditional causes like refractive errors and cataracts, as well as emerging issues associated with an ageing population, including age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma,” said Dr Hafiz.

He added that over the last several years the Southeast Asian nation had made great strides in improving eye health but there were still significant gaps to plug, especially in more rural areas.

The National Eye Survey III (NES III) conducted last year, for instance, showed a significant drop in blindness in the Malaysian states of Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, and Sarawak compared to the previous survey in 2014.

“In NES III, six out of 1,000 Sarawak residents experienced blindness compared to 16 out of 1,000 residents in 2014,” Dr Mohamad Aziz Salowi, an ophthalmologist and NES III researcher, told reporters at the NES III launching ceremony, according to Bernama. The main causes of blindness were cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma.

Despite the improvements, many Malaysians still suffer from preventable vision impairment. In 2022, then Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said that the most common causes of vision impairment were untreated cataracts and myopia, stressing that “nearly 80 percent of the main causes of blindness can be treated and prevented,” reported *The Star*.

Besides a dearth of eye care services, misconceptions on the nature of eye disease also contribute to the high numbers of untreated conditions and late diagnoses. Many falsely believe that “good vision equates to the absence of discomfort,” stressed Dr Hafiz, while the lack of symptoms in the early stages of some eye conditions gives people a false sense of security. To compound this already poor understanding, some are convinced that diets can either cause or treat health problems, which in turn can lead them to avoid consulting a doctor or start seeking care when it’s too late.

“In Malaysia, many choose unverified ‘traditional’ food-based remedies, potentially delaying essential healthcare interventions, which could lead to situations where eye problems worsen or become more complicated to treat,” he said.

Though nutritious food can’t always prevent or cure eye problems, he added that maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including regular exercise and a clean diet, could play an important role in promoting overall health while also having a positive impact on eye health in particular.

“A clean and nutritious diet, rich in fruits and vegetables, provides antioxidants that help protect the eyes from oxidative stress, which is linked to age-related eye conditions such as cataracts and AMD,” he explained.

In addition, regular exercise can improve blood circulation, which in turn delivers essential nutrients and oxygen to the eyes, supporting their optimal function and reducing the risk of conditions related to poor circulation, such as vasculopathy. Physical activity is also crucial for diabetics as it can keep blood sugar levels under check. “For individuals with diabetes, maintaining stable blood sugar is crucial in



A healthy diet can contribute to eye health



Most eye care services are also located in urban areas, creating huge inequities, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Malaysia

preventing the development of diabetic retinopathy,” Dr Hafiz said.

But while being healthy is beneficial, people should still go for regular screening if they want to avoid vision impairment from treatable or preventable conditions, which is why comprehensive eye examinations remain crucial for early detection and management of potential eye issues, even in individuals leading healthy lifestyles.

This means people without eye conditions or vision problems should consult an optometrist or ophthalmologist every one to two years. Those affected by eye conditions or at a higher risk for them, such as diabetics and people with a family history of eye disease, may require more frequent check-ups.

“Some conditions, like glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration, can have a genetic component. If there’s a family history of certain eye diseases, inform your eye care professional, as this may influence the frequency and type of screenings,” he advised.

Warning signs that warrant a consultation with a doctor include changes in vision, such as blurriness, and double vision as well as difficulty seeing at night and persistent eye redness, pain, or discomfort.

Public health measures to improve eye care

Multiple interventions are needed to tackle the billions of preventable vision loss cases around the world. For example, widening access to eye care services is particularly urgent, especially in the rural areas of low- and middle-income countries.

Equipment to manage eye conditions is often not available in many of these countries, while eye care is frequently not included in health insurance schemes, making diagnosis and treatment unaffordable for many people, according to the WHO’s Package of eye care interventions. Most eye care services are also located in urban areas, creating huge inequities between those who can access the services and those who simply can’t because they live far from medical centres.

“Deploying increased medical resources is critical, especially in low- and middle-income countries like Malaysia. This includes establishing and strengthening eye care facilities in underserved areas, providing essential equipment, and ensuring a sufficient number of skilled eye care professionals. Mobile eye clinics and telemedicine initiatives can also help reach remote communities, facilitating early detection and intervention,” argues Dr Hafiz.

Malaysia offers a good example of how to creatively



Making cataract surgery more accessible could significantly improve eye health

Dr Hafiz agrees and believes that a key long-term goal should be the integration of eye care into primary healthcare to ensure that “routine eye check-ups become a regular part of overall health maintenance.”

use limited resources. Over the last several years, it has successfully implemented a cataract care programme that has reduced the gap between urban and rural areas. Since 2013, a group of ophthalmologists and optometrists, with the support of the Ministry of Health, has organised mobile clinics to visit people living in rural areas. In the Malaysian state of Sarawak, for example, between 2013 and 2019, mobile clinics were able to screen around 22,000 patients while carrying out 4,155 cataract surgeries for free, providing essential treatment to many people who otherwise would have forgone treatment and suffered from vision impairment, according to the WHO.

But some challenges continue to hinder the expansion of the programme, including lack of funding and specialist shortages, Dr Mohamad Aziz Salowi, a public health ophthalmologist who coordinated the programme, told the WHO.

“For such a program to move, we cannot move alone. This is what I have learned over the years. We need support from everyone - we need support from policy and instruction from above. We need to collaborate with others, not only NGOs, but also within the divisions of the Ministry of Health, and to coordinate outside the Ministry of Health,” he said.

Dr Hafiz agrees and believes that a key long-term goal should be the integration of eye care into primary healthcare to ensure that “routine eye check-ups become a regular part of overall health maintenance”

as this approach can identify eye conditions at an early stage when they can often be successfully managed, thus preventing unnecessary vision impairment.

In addition to strengthening eye care services, raising awareness about how to maintain vision health is also paramount as it will empower people to take action to protect their eyes.

“Public health campaigns can dispel misconceptions, emphasise the significance of regular eye checkups, and educate communities about common eye conditions. In Malaysia, tailored awareness programmes considering cultural nuances can help overcome barriers to seeking eye care,” explained Dr Hafiz.

In particular, the WHO’s Package of eye care interventions stresses the specific need to raise awareness among at-risk groups like the elderly, people with diabetes, and those with a family history of eye conditions. It also recommends addressing the common misconception that reduced vision is a normal part of the ageing process.

Promising research in ophthalmology

There are now several lines of research that may one day give us better diagnostic tools and treatment options for several eye diseases. One particularly promising field is genetic therapy which could offer a fix for faulty genes that cause hard-to-treat conditions.

A good example is Luxturna, a drug approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2017 to treat a rare type of hereditary disorder — biallelic RPE65 mutation-associated retinal dystrophy — that often leads to vision impairment in early life and then progresses to blindness. The cause is a mutation in the RPE65 gene that disrupts the production of an essential protein that processes light and allows normal vision. Luxturna works by injecting a normal RPE65 copy into the retina (where light is processed to send vision signals to the brain), allowing some people to improve their vision in a way that was previously unheard-of.

“For those patients who have undergone Luxturna treatment, the results have been promising. Clinical trials demonstrated improvements in functional vision and the ability to perform daily activities, representing a groundbreaking advancement in the field of genetic therapies for eye conditions,” explained Dr Hafiz.

He added that, in the future, genetic therapy could also contribute to treating other eye conditions, even common ones, as researchers gain a better understanding of the genetic causes driving the development of diseases like AMD. “As we identify more genes associated with these conditions, the potential targets for genetic therapies increase,” he said.

Stem cells and artificial intelligence are two other candidates for significant breakthroughs in



AI in ophthalmology might revolutionise diagnostics and disease monitoring

ophthalmology.

Like in many other areas of medical research, stem cells are widely studied for their potential to produce almost any type of human tissue as a replacement for a diseased one. In ophthalmology, this could mean replacing damaged cells in the retina. According to Dr Hafiz, scientists are already investigating the use of stem cells to regenerate retinal tissues, which could potentially restore vision in conditions like AMD and retinal dystrophie.

A small but ground-breaking study conducted at Moorfields Eye Hospital and the UCL Institute of Ophthalmology in the UK, for example, has shown that injecting a patch of stem cell-derived tissue into the eyes of two patients with severe AMD could lead to significant vision improvements. “In the months before the operation my sight was really poor and I couldn’t see anything out of my right eye. I was struggling to see things clearly, even when up-close. After the surgery my eye sight improved to the point where I can now read the newspaper and help my wife out with the gardening,” said 86-year-old Douglas Waters, one of the patients in the trial, according to a press release.

In addition to stem cells, another promising area is AI, particularly its potential for diagnostic breakthroughs, as the much-touted technology has

already shown its ability to outperform humans in analysing different types of health data.

“The integration of AI in ophthalmology is revolutionizing diagnostics and disease monitoring. AI algorithms can analyze medical imaging data, such as retinal scans, to detect early signs of conditions like diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma, enabling timely intervention,” said Dr Hafiz.

Researchers are now feeding massive amounts of health record data into AI systems to test whether computers are able to spot disease patterns that humans can’t see. Accurate detection could speed up diagnosis and identify various subsets of patients, for example, who will experience poor outcomes after cataract surgery, who will see their glaucoma progress over time instead of being stable, or who will require a corneal transplant to treat keratoconus, a condition making the cornea (the dome-shaped part in the front of the eye) thinner and bulging outward.

“These research lines represent just a snapshot of the dynamic field of ophthalmic research. Continuous exploration and collaboration within these areas have the potential to lead to groundbreaking developments in the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of various eye conditions, ultimately improving patient outcomes in eye care,” said Dr Hafiz. ■



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Approximately 50 to 200 of every 100,000 people are afflicted with keratoconus.

*Source: Cornea Foundation of America

KERATOCONUS:

A Conical Cornea - Understanding and Managing the Condition

Keratoconus is a relatively uncommon eye condition that affects the shape of the cornea, the transparent dome-shaped structure at the front of the eye. In this condition, the central or paracentral cornea gradually thins and steepens, resulting in a cone-like shape. While keratoconus typically impacts both eyes, the severity can vary between them. This condition often emerges in individuals aged from late teens to their 30s, and though its exact cause remains elusive, it's associated with genetic and environmental factors.

What are the Risk Factors?

Frequent eye rubbing, eye conditions like atopy and vernal keratoconjunctivitis, a family history of the disease, and systemic conditions such as Down syndrome, connective tissue disorders, retinitis pigmentosa, sleep apnea, and floppy eyelid syndrome.

What are the Symptoms?

Recognising the symptoms of keratoconus is vital for early diagnosis and management. Key indicators include the following:

- Progressive blurring of vision, sensitivity to light (photophobia), and glare.
- Eyeglass prescription frequent changes.
- Contact lens transition from glasses to soft contact lenses and possibly toric or rigid gas permeable lenses.
- History of frequent eye rubbing.

If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your ophthalmologist for a comprehensive eye examination appointment. Don't wait; early diagnosis is crucial for effective management.

What are the Treatments Options?

Managing keratoconus depends on its severity, which is determined through a comprehensive eye examination categorised into four stages: early, moderate, advanced, and severe. Treatment goals include achieving good vision correction and slowing down disease progression. Here are the available treatment modalities:

1. Early Stage

In the early stages, glasses or soft toric contact lenses can improve visual acuity and correct astigmatism.

2. Moderate to Advanced Cases

Rigid gas permeable lenses are often more effective due to their better fit. Specialised lenses like semi-scleral contact lenses, Rose K lenses, scleral lenses, hybrid lenses, and PROSE (prosthetic replacement of the ocular surface ecosystem) can be considered for optimal vision correction.

• Intrastromal Corneal Ring Segments (ICRS)

ICRS may be suitable for mild to moderate keratoconus. This surgical procedure involves inserting small curved PMMA (polymethyl methacrylate) devices or segments inserted into a corneal tunnel created either with manual incision or femtosecond laser technology. The goal is to reshape the cornea and improve vision.

• Corneal Collagen Cross-Linking

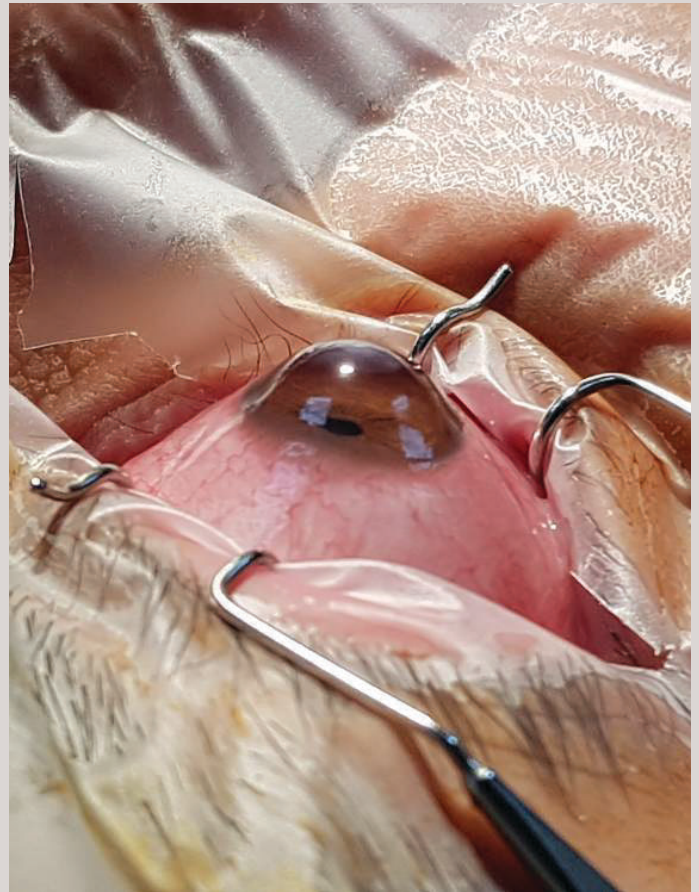
This minimally invasive procedure aims to halt disease progression by using riboflavin (Vitamin B2) and ultraviolet light for about 30 minutes to stiffen the cornea.

3. Severe Stage

• Corneal Transplant

When contact lenses are no longer tolerable, or significant corneal scarring affects vision, corneal transplant surgery may be necessary. Options include deep anterior lamellar keratoplasty (DALK) and penetrating keratoplasty (PKP). DALK involves replacing the anterior cornea while preserving the patient's endothelium. In contrast, PKP replaces the entire corneal layer.

Following treatment or surgery for keratoconus, patients should expect regular follow-up appointments and may require long-term use of topical eye drops, particularly after corneal transplant surgery.



What to Expect During Your Treatment:

Complications may arise post-treatment, such as temporary stromal edema, sterile infiltrates, corneal scarring, and infectious keratitis following corneal collagen cross-linking. ICRS may be associated with corneal perforation, infectious keratitis, persistent inflammation, and implant erosion. Corneal transplant procedures carry risks like graft rejection, graft failure, infectious keratitis, glaucoma, cataracts, risk of traumatic rupture in penetrating keratoplasty and irregular high astigmatism post-transplant.

How Do I Prevent It?

For preventive measures, it's essential to undergo a yearly full eye assessment, especially for individuals at higher risk of developing keratoconus. This proactive approach to screening is crucial in identifying the condition at its earliest stages, ultimately improving the chances of successful management.

Keratoconus, a challenging eye condition, can be effectively managed with personalised treatment plans, improving vision and quality of life. Early detection through regular eye assessments is crucial for optimal outcomes.

At KPJ Centre For Sight, our ophthalmology experts, led by Dr. Lai Yin Peng, are committed to providing exceptional care for Keratoconus patients. Early detection and appropriate treatment can help you maintain good vision and quality of life despite this challenging condition. Schedule your annual eye assessment today to protect your vision for a brighter tomorrow.



For further information, please contact us at the following address or scan the QR Code

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Care for Life

Sodium intake exceeding WHO standards is a deadly affair

Multipronged approach essential in preserving global health

High salt consumption is associated with the largest number of deaths related to eating habits worldwide, with about 1.89 million deaths every year, because it can raise blood pressure thus increasing the risk for heart disease, the World Health Organization (WHO) has revealed in the *WHO Global Report on Sodium Intake Reduction*, a first-of-its-kind study published in March 2023.

The report says that the global community will not meet the WHO goal of a 30 percent reduction in salt intake by 2025. The international health body recommends a daily dose of fewer than 2,000 milligrams, which is about one teaspoon. The current average daily consumption is over 4,000 milligrams, twice the recommended quantity. The WHO report also notes that, by the end of 2022, only five percent of the countries in the world had enforced at least two of the organisation's mandatory sodium reduction policies, while 73 percent did not implement them widely. Non-observance of sodium reduction policies was most prevalent among low-income countries.

Health risks from high salt intake

Salt consisting of sodium chloride has been widely applied as a food preservative due to its antibacterial properties in high concentrations. An essential nutrient, it regulates nerve impulses, enables muscle function, maintains the balance between water and minerals, and transports nutrients through the plasma membrane. However, excessive salt intake has been linked to an increased risk of heart complications, hypertension, and stroke.

A sodium-rich diet retains water in the bloodstream, causing blood volume to rise and elevating blood pressure. High blood pressure causes the heart to work more rigorously, leading to abnormal blood flow that can affect surrounding organs and blood vessels. Uncontrolled blood pressure increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and impaired kidney functions. "We have one adult in four that has high blood pressure, and we have two million people dying every year as a result of consuming too much salt," Dr Francesco Branca, director of the WHO Department of Nutrition for Health and Development, said during a WHO podcast.

Researchers from the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans discovered that individuals who frequently consumed

extra salt in their daily meals were 28 percent more likely to die prematurely than those who never or rarely added salt. The findings, published in the *European Heart Journal*, also indicated that adding excess salt to meals reduced life expectancy in men by more than two years and by 1.5 years in women.

Global consensus on sodium reduction

Current WHO guidelines suggesting reductions in global sodium intake date back to 2011 when all 194 member states declared their commitment to reducing exposure to unhealthy diets. This was followed by various public health initiatives over the succeeding decade, including the United Nations' sustainability goals and action plans to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by one-third.

Adoption of policies and actions to reduce sodium intake

The report offers a comprehensive set of public health policies on a country level to achieve the WHO target in salt intake reduction, along with a Sodium Country Score Card that highlights a country's sodium reduction implementation rate based on a score of 1 (least implementations) to 4 (most implementations). According to the report, only nine countries had comprehensive sodium-reduction policies: Brazil, Chile, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Spain, and Uruguay.

A sodium-rich diet retains water in the bloodstream, causing blood volume to rise and elevating blood pressure.



Public health policies to reduce sodium-rich foods are needed



High salt consumption is associated with the largest number of deaths related to eating habits worldwide, with about 1.89 million deaths every year

Best buys for salt reduction

The WHO also recommends practical measures, such as best buys policies, that promote lowering sodium content in essential food products, front-of-pack labelling to encourage consumers to purchase healthier alternatives, and mass media campaigns to enhance public awareness of the adverse effects of high salt intake. The approach also advocates the adoption of public food procurement and service policies in public establishments.

Mandatory low sodium formulation

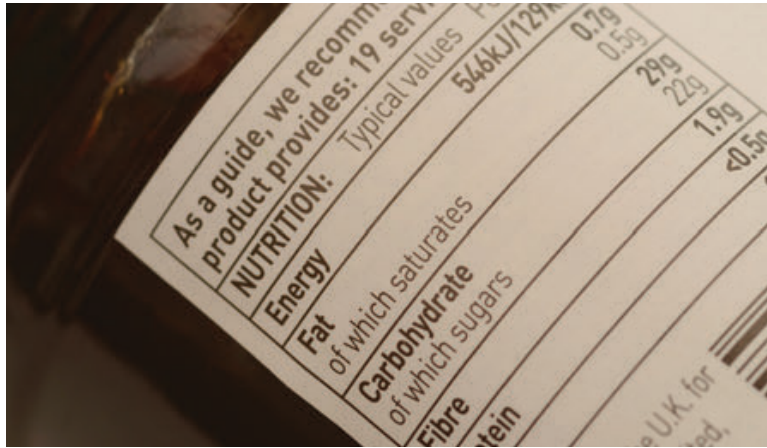
One of the issues that the new set of policies address is the prevalence of high sodium content in processed food, an essential grocery item in developed countries. Another is the increased popularity of eating outside food. “In many high-income countries, the largest amount of salt comes from manufactured food. About 80% comes from manufactured food, such as bread, cheeses, preserved meat, but also high salty snacks, and food consumed out of home,” Dr Branca elaborated in the podcast. The buy-best policy has led to significant shifts in regional dietary intake. For example, numerous countries have seen their local food manufacturers voluntarily reformulate

their products with lower salt levels to support the government’s efforts to reduce the prevalence of NCDs.

Reformulation practice dates back to the 1980s when several nations introduced restrictions on the maximum permissible sodium content in bread, peanut butter, and tomato sauce. For example, Saudi Arabia implemented a mandatory sodium limit of 1g/100 g on 22 processed items, such as bread and salted yoghurt, and 22 other food items by 1g/100g. South Africa’s sodium reduction measures were implemented in 13 food categories, including margarine, cereals, meat products, and instant soup powders. Manufacturers there were given three years to ensure compliance with government policies, although the country has yet to enforce a mandatory sodium content declaration on food packaging.

Procurement of public food with reduced salt content

Another rich target area for sodium reduction is in the so-called public food procurement sector. The WHO has recommended limiting the serving of sodium-rich food in public institutions such as schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and workplaces. Public eateries can



Food product labelling is essential in monitoring salt intake

The labelling of salt levels in food is equally essential as it promotes healthier eating habits, stimulates producers to create lower-sodium alternatives, and informs consumers about the food's contents and nutritional value.

do this, for example, by not including saltshakers on customer tables. Governments can also set an example by enforcing a healthy eating culture by serving low-sodium meals at government offices, public health facilities, community centres, and nearby shops and restaurants.

Some countries are already ahead of the curve. Brazil's Ministry of Health, for example, has proposed a new ordinance that promotes access to healthy food as a fundamental human right and expands the distribution of unprocessed or minimally processed food in health facilities nationwide. This includes meals and snacks served by catering services during meetings, coffee breaks, conferences, and formal events. To improve the health status of healthcare workers, the ordinance also prohibits the advertising and promotion of ultra-processed foods within healthcare facilities.

Applying salt reduction measures at kindergartens, nurseries, and schools is crucial in cultivating a balanced dietary habit early. Dr Balbir Singh, a cardiologist from the Max Hospital in India, has raised concerns that high intake of sodium-rich food during childhood can influence food consumption in adulthood. "Which means if you consume salty foods over a long period of time, you get accustomed to the taste and reach out for even saltier foods," he explained to the *Indian Express* news portal.

While some individual governments have set standards for food and beverages for school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks, others have done so for low-sodium meals at school canteens, snack bars, and vending machines. But few are enforcing any requirements to sell low-sodium food in eateries and convenience shops within proximity to schools.

Seychelles offers a good example of how a country regulates the nutritional standards of its learning institutions. Through its National School Nutrition Policy, the government sets meal standards and guidelines for food provided to students during school

activities. Daily meals should not contribute more than 30 percent of recommended sodium intake, precisely 210 mg/day for children in daycare centres, 360 mg/day for children in primary school, and 480 mg/day for children in secondary school. The national guidelines also emphasise the monitoring of access to nutritional food through the use of school nutrition action groups consisting of parents, teachers, dining staff, and nurses.

Food product labelling

The labelling of salt levels in food is equally essential as it promotes healthier eating habits, stimulates producers to create lower-sodium alternatives, and informs consumers about the food's contents and nutritional value. This practice can significantly influence reformulation enforcement and monitoring, front-of-pack-labelling, public food procurement and service rules, fiscal policies, and marketing limits.

Sodium level declarations for all commercial pre-packaged foods have been placed on the back or side of food packaging as required by the *Codex alimentarius*, a guide on international food standards established by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and WHO. Member states have been advised to comply with Codex on nutritional labelling, with the further recommendation that the quantity of sodium be expressed as "salt level". The need for this proposal was reinforced by a 2016 survey in Beijing conducted by Peking University where 47.7 percent of nearly 700 supermarket patrons were unaware of the relationship between sodium and salt. The study findings published by *BMC Public Health* suggested that labelling should display the word "salt" rather than sodium to improve consumer awareness and understanding.

Front-of-pack labelling (FoPL) on pre-packaged food has increased the visibility of sodium content disclosure, increasing the chances of influencing consumer purchase. An "at-a-glance" labelling with explicit and straightforward language is appropriate for shoppers who read food labels for a few seconds before making purchasing decisions. The endorsement logo highlighting the seal of approval by renowned bodies such as the ministry of health or national food authority is the most common FoPL applied voluntarily by 15 countries.

Multiple traffic signals (MTL) FoPL is the second most extensively used mandatory and voluntary labelling system that offers information about the content of essential nutrients per 100 g/serving and employs text descriptors and a colour code adapted from traffic lights to categorise nutrient content as low, medium, or high. A study by the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences revealed that parents from multiple Chinese provinces preferred MTL labelling as the nutritional information depicted was easier to understand. The results, published in the *Nutrients* journal, also suggested that adding subjective terms,

symbols, and colours on the label display contributed to parents' choice of MTL.

Various countries have demonstrated distinct approaches in their FoPL system. Chile put up warning labels on food products with exceedingly high sodium content (10 mg/100g in a food product). Sri Lanka uses colour-coding to indicate sodium levels per 100 g of food product: red labelling indicates sodium levels greater than 1.25 g, amber indicates sodium levels between 0.25 g and 1.25 g, and green indicates sodium levels less than 0.25 g.

Australia and New Zealand have implemented the Health Star Rating that summarises the nutritional quality of a food product and assigns ratings from 0.5, indicating less healthy, to five stars which is the most healthy. The ratings have prompted food manufacturers to reformulate food products, leading to a decrease in salt levels by five percent. France has applied the Nutri-Score profiling system where food products with sodium quantity that are 90 mg per 100 g or less produce zero scores, while higher sodium content has a maximum score of 10, meaning the lower the score, the more nutritious the food.

Public awareness campaigns

The mass media plays a vital role in promoting public awareness of the dangers of high sodium intake. Public campaigns typically either focus on lifestyle modification or consumer education and come in many forms. In 2015, Australia implemented a voluntary practice focusing more on raising awareness about food choice and portion size that optimises individual sodium intake. Recently, China's National Institute for Nutrition and Health recommended that online food delivery apps display health messages and include a submenu with "regular salt" and "reduced salt" options. These measures effectively persuaded customers to purchase healthier options and prompted restaurants to meet customer demand by offering meal products with 25 percent less sodium.

South Africa saw an extensive media campaign by Salt Watch, a health advocacy group funded by the National Department of Health, to increase awareness of the link between NCDs and high sodium consumption. The campaign run daily for six months on television and radio and consisted of education and information segments as well as low-salt recipes involving local medical doctors and media personalities. Local supermarkets in the United Arab Emirates launched the "Healthy is Easy" campaign that reduces salt in their own-brand products and utilises social media to promote salt intake reduction tips.

Malaysia's Ministry of Health conducted an extensive awareness campaign on salt and health which included public access to educational tools such as guidelines, manuals, infographics, videos, posters, recipes books, booklet sodium counting, and slide presentations on its website. Healthcare staff



Cutting sodium consumption is one of the most cost-effective ways of enhancing health

were properly trained in applying the educational tools in conducting public events such as talks, exhibitions, cooking demonstrations, seminars, workshops, and continuous medical education, especially during World Salt Awareness Week, which is observed annually.

Taxation on sodium rich products

More interventionist policies can take the form of a higher tax levy on salty food products. This not only generates higher state revenues but also encourages the food industry to reformulate their products, reduces consumption, and convinces consumers to seek healthier alternatives. Such efforts, such as the Public Health Product Tax in Hungary, have resulted in 40 percent of producers of unhealthy food products altering their product formulas to reduce or eliminate harmful substances, resulting in the government being able to reduce healthcare expenditures on diet-related chronic diseases.

Commitment to preserving quality of life

Cutting sodium consumption is one of the most cost-effective ways of enhancing health and lowering the burden of non-communicable illnesses since it can prevent a significant number of cardiovascular events and fatalities at very low cost. The WHO has estimated that up to seven billion lives could be saved worldwide by 2030 through lower sodium intake.

But it will require national governments to continue implementing, monitoring, and enforcing sodium reduction policies and other measures to ensure that every adult and child enjoys a healthy food environment and is able to realise their fundamental right to safe, nutritious food and the highest attainable quality of health. ■

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Retinal Image Analysis

By Dr. Cheong Fook Meng, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur



The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Retinal Image Analysis works by taking retinal images and uploading them to an AI module for analysis whereby a professional report will be generated in 3 minutes.

Over the past decade, medical technology has taken great strides, opening new possibilities for patients. With increased accessibility, early detection and superior treatment options are now within reach, greatly enhancing the chances of successful recovery. Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur recognises the importance of regularly evaluating new treatments, services, technologies, and data to provide value-based care for patients. It has been successfully integrating AI technology into ophthalmology, cardiology, and radiology departments, enabling seamless service and increased accuracy in diagnosis. In eye care alone, AI screened over 500 patients in the first two months of its adoption, accurately identifying five cases of diabetic retinopathy for immediate treatment.

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) Retinal Image Analysis works by taking retinal images and uploading them to an AI module for analysis whereby a professional report will be generated in 3 minutes.

The AI Retinal Image Analysis provides several advantages; namely, capturing retinal images in just 1 minute, generating health assessment report in 3 minutes, identifying 9 most common chronic disease risks, has over 95% accuracy in identifying retinal abnormalities, over 10 million images available for further AI training and deep learning and the ability to detect 35 common retina-related diseases.

With the continued advancement of deep machine learning from millions of images and clinical data correlations, current AI Retinal Image Analysis technology has made significant progress in the way certain eye diseases are diagnosed, leading to earlier

detection and better patient treatment outcomes. Some of the ways AI Retinal Image Analysis improve patient care include:

1. Early detection and diagnosis, AI image analysis algorithms can detect early signs of eye disease such as diabetic retinopathy and age-related macula degeneration as well as identify risks of glaucoma. These are 3 of the most common causes of irreversible vision loss. Early detection and treatment can prevent or reduce visual function loss. Hence, it results in better patient outcomes.
2. Personalised management. AI technology can analyse retinal images and provide clinicians with customised management recommendations for each patient, based on the eye condition and severity of the disease.
3. Improved accessibility and efficiency. AI analyses can process large volumes of retinal images rapidly, reducing the time and cost required for manual evaluations by trained specialists. It is an effective tool for large-scale screening, providing access to a greater cross-section of the community.

The key differences between AI Retinal Image Analyses and conventional image analyses are:

1. Accuracy. Extensive AI learning from millions of retinal images correlated with clinical data sets has resulted in a system that is highly sensitive and specific for detecting retinal diseases. The accuracy of AI image analyses has been tested and compared favourably against highly experienced retinal specialists.
2. Consistency and objectivity. AI analyses have been proven to provide consistent diagnoses and staging of disease severity against different retinal specialists and over time. AI algorithms are not influenced by subjective interpretations or bias, leading to more consistent diagnoses and grading of disease severity compared to conventional interpretations by human observers.
3. Speed and efficiency. Automated AI image analyses can process retinal images much faster than humans, which reduces the time and cost required for manual screening of conventional images by ophthalmologists. Large volumes of retinal images can be analysed rapidly, allowing a higher and faster through-put of patients undergoing health screening.

The AI Retinal Image Analysis is designed for health screening purposes only and it shall not be considered as primary and conclusive diagnosis of a current medical condition or treatment. Results derived from the Analysis do not constitute medical advice and are subject to verification / confirmation by a qualified Specialist Doctor.



Gamma Knife Radiosurgery

Gamma Knife is a non-invasive neurosurgical procedure which uses powerful doses of radiation to target and treat diseased brain tissue while leaving surrounding tissue intact. There is no real knife involved, rather the 'knife' refers to 192 precise beams of radiation that attack tumours and abnormalities, shrinking them over time or stopping their growth.

No incisions are made in the patient's head, instead very precisely focused beams of radiation are directed to the treatment area in the brain. This groundbreaking technology allows physicians to operate on brain lesions often considered inoperable; offering new hope for patients with brain tumours, vascular malformations and functional disorders.



- ✓ It's not a knife but a non-invasive and painless procedure
- ✓ Gold Standard Of Radiosurgery Treatment Modality For Brain Tumors and Lesions
- ✓ Malaysia first hospital with Gamma Knife Radiosurgery Since 2014



Accident and Emergency Department

The Accident & Emergency (A&E) Unit at Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur is well-equipped to handle any injury or medical emergency around the clock every day. At A&E we have a dedicated team of doctors and nurses who are specially trained for emergency situations and they will evaluate the situation immediately using the triage method. The most severe cases with life-threatening conditions will be our top priority, while the rest may need a 30-minute wait, depending on the number of patients at the A&E.

In addition to having a team of emergency specialists assessing and managing your case, a multidisciplinary team of specialists and surgeons are also on-call to attend to complex medical conditions.

Our Emergency Department provides 24-hour private ambulance services and medical transportation. The ambulance service provided by our hospital is well-equipped (type A) with a team of qualified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) and nurses who can attend any medical emergencies.



A&E Services

At Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur, we pride ourselves in any emergency medical care, treatments and management:

- Trauma or Accident
- Cardiac emergencies such as heart attack
- Stroke
- Head injury & seizures
- Obstetrician and Gynaecological Emergencies
- Urology emergency
- Orthopaedic and sports injury
- Paediatric emergencies
- Respiratory emergencies
- Burns or scalds
- High fever
- Severe allergies
- Fast stabilisation and transfer of patients with acute conditions to catheterisation laboratory and operation theatre

The diagnostic process at the A&E Department may involve various departments (modalities) such as the clinical laboratory services and imaging services. Once the patient has received the urgent medical intervention, he or she will be warded for management (medical/surgical).

Placing your well-being at the heart of everything we do

Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur has been delivering exceptional patient care since 1996. As a part of IHH Healthcare, we are one of the leading private hospitals in the metropolitan capital of Malaysia. Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur is highly respected for its excellent clinical outcomes and has become a reputable healthcare service provider in both Malaysia and the South East Asian region. Every year, we are caring and treating more than 50,000 international patients from over 120 countries in 40 clinical specialties.

Gleneagles Hospital Kuala Lumpur is one of the first private hospital in Malaysia to be accredited by US-based Joint Commission International (JCI); while locally we are accredited with the Malaysian Society for Quality in Health (MSQH).

In addition, other notable awards that attest to the quality of care at GKL included:

AWARDS & ACCREDITATION

- Hospital of the Year in Malaysia, Customer Care Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific, Endocrinology Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific, Gastroenterology Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific, ICU Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific, Neurology Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific, and Prostate Care Service Provider of the Year in Asia-Pacific at Global Health Awards 2023
- 2023 Malaysia Hospital Customer Value Leadership Award by Frost & Sullivan
- Reader's Digest Trusted Brand Award – 2023
- Malaysia Technology Excellence Award 2023 in Medical Technology - Healthcare Award
- Healthcare Asia Awards 2023 in Service Innovation of the Year - Malaysia
- ESG Business Awards 2023 in Community Health Outreach Programme Award - Malaysia
- Malaysia Health & Wellness Brand Awards 2023 - CSR Award



Appointed as the preferred hospital since April 2019



Awards:



With rising mental health problems but a shortage of services, group therapy is offering new hope

Author: Kaaren Mathias, Senior Lecturer in public health, University of Canterbury

This article was published in *The Conversation* in November 2023:

<https://theconversation.com/with-rising-mental-health-problems-but-a-shortage-of-services-group-therapy-is-offering-new-hope-214711>

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Group interventions might typically mean weekly or monthly meetings with a regular group experiencing mental distress.

The needs of people with mental health problems are increasing globally, especially following the turbulence of COVID.

Even before the pandemic, it was clear that despite more resources for mental health services in New Zealand and Australia, the prevalence of mental health problems was on the rise.

Mental health care in the current format is not meeting the needs of people living in the community, and there's an ongoing shortage of mental health providers and relevant therapies.

In an unequal world, the rising burden of mental illness is often made worse by lack of access to quality evidence-based care. We need a new approach and it should focus on communities, scalability and equity.

In our recently published scoping review, we examine how group-based therapies could improve mental health outcomes.

Social factors are important

Many think of mental health care as involving a visit to a GP, psychologist or psychiatrist, a prescription for

medicines and perhaps individual “talk therapy”.

But we wanted to examine the value of “psychosocial” care – a broader approach that meets individual needs but also considers social factors such as housing, income or relationships.

Our review aimed to understand the value of group-based interventions, recognising the importance of social networks and relationships for recovery across all communities.

Group interventions might typically mean weekly or monthly meetings with a regular group experiencing mental distress. These would be facilitated by peers or community members who have been through similar difficulties.

Our study focuses on communities with fewer resources in South Asia, including Nepal, India and Bangladesh. It takes a regional approach because we know context matters in mental health, and one size doesn't fit all.

We considered group interventions that shared a cultural context to see if they better engaged people on a local level. As such, our findings are also relevant for addressing the mental health care gap

in Aotearoa New Zealand. The value of relationships and whānau care is already well recognised for Māori.

There are also promising recent studies showing the value of group interventions for mental health among young people, and the contribution of kaimahi (non-regulated health workers) to improve outcomes for people with chronic conditions.

Why group-based therapy?

Group interventions have been shown to improve mental health outcomes in both community trials and systematic reviews. A recent meta-analysis of 81 studies showed talk therapy is the best initial treatment for depression.

If psychosocial interventions were a pill, their effectiveness would be trumpeted globally. Yet Western biomedicine (mental health care that requires psychiatrists and psychologists to deliver it) continues to command the majority of resources because of hierarchies and global economic structures that privilege psychiatry and medicines.

As well as being effective, there are other advantages to group-based interventions because they:

- do not rely on expensive specialist providers
- can be delivered in communities and therefore improve access to care
- are responsive to local contexts such as groups in rural areas
- improve outcomes for groups that typically experience worse health, including new migrants to New Zealand
- increase engagement with mental health services
- and are highly cost-effective and scalable.

Group therapy improves mental health and social connection and is at least as effective as individual therapy.

It can be used for a wide range of mental health problems and is more cost-effective than one-to-one individual therapy. In communities that have a more collective approach to health and wellbeing, such as Indigenous groups, mental health care delivered in groups can better reflect these values. This in turn may increase accessibility and uptake.

How group therapies work

Most quantitative health studies only ask whether a particular intervention works. But we used an approach that looks for how interventions work by examining the contexts, mechanisms and outcomes.

As well as examining effectiveness, a “realist” evaluation seeks to provide an explanatory analysis of how and why complex social interventions lead to improved health outcomes. This helped us assess what works, for whom and in what circumstances.

In this review of 42 peer-reviewed research publications, we identified five key mechanisms that groups offer to improve mental health:

1. They increase opportunity to be part of trusted relationships, which is a key social determinant of health. Group members described new friendships



2. that continue after the intervention was over.
2. They trigger a sense of social inclusion and support, meaning people access resources and services more easily. Social inclusion is an important factor that determines mental health. Studies gave examples of how group members supported each other emotionally and with child care, agricultural and home responsibilities.
3. Groups can strengthen people's ability to manage mental distress because they provide an opportunity to rehearse and use mental health skills and knowledge in a safe social space. This is key to building communication skills and self esteem.
4. They trigger a sense of belonging, and members can manage emotions better. This enabled behaviour changes. For example, widows in northeast India described how they were able to identify and control feelings of anger because of their sense of connection with the group.
5. Groups provide a sense of collective strength and can act collaboratively for their own wellbeing. Group interventions are particularly beneficial for minorities, such as non-binary and transgender people, who experience higher rates of mental distress as well as social exclusion. A group can offer social support and affirmation, which have also been identified as key mental health determinants.

These mechanisms are relevant in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as across the wider South Asian region we studied. The recent government inquiry into mental health and addiction, He Ara Oranga, underlined the value of non-biomedical and local solutions for mental health, including therapeutic groups. It called for a move from “big psychiatry” to “big community”.

Group therapy fits well with a community approach as it can meet mental health needs without medicines, hospitals or expensive professionals. Psychosocial group therapies do not seek to replace formal mental health care. They complement it by providing accessible, cost-effective care in communities and among people who have unmet mental health needs. ■

Group interventions have been shown to improve mental health outcomes in both community trials and systematic reviews.

Health misinformation is rampant on social media – here’s what it does, why it spreads and what people can do about it

Author: *Monica Wang, Associate Professor of Public Health, Boston University*

This article was published in *The Conversation* in December 2023: <https://theconversation.com/health-misinformation-is-rampant-on-social-media-heres-what-it-does-why-it-spreads-and-what-people-can-do-about-it-217059>

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The global anti-vaccine movement and vaccine hesitancy that accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic show no signs of abating.

According to a survey of U.S. adults, Americans in October 2023 were less likely to view approved vaccines as safe than they were in April 2021. As vaccine confidence falls, health misinformation continues to spread like wildfire on social media and in real life.

I am a public health expert in health misinformation, science communication and health behavior change.

In my view, we cannot underestimate the dangers of health misinformation and the need to understand why it spreads and what we can do about it. Health misinformation is defined as any health-related claim that is false based on current scientific consensus.

False claims about vaccines

Vaccines are the No. 1 topic of misleading health claims. Some common myths about vaccines include:

- **Their supposed link with human diagnoses of autism.** Multiple studies have discredited this claim, and it has been firmly refuted by the World Health Organization, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- **Concerns with the COVID-19 vaccine leading to infertility.** This connection has been debunked through a systematic review and meta-analysis, one of the most robust forms of synthesizing scientific evidence.
- **Safety concerns about vaccine ingredients, such as thimerosal, aluminum and formaldehyde.** Extensive studies have shown these ingredients are safe when used in the minimal amounts contained in vaccines.
- **Vaccines as medically unnecessary to protect from disease.** The development and dissemination of vaccines for life-threatening diseases such as smallpox, polio, measles, mumps, rubella and the flu has saved millions of lives. It also played a critical role in historic increases in average life expectancy – from 47 years in 1900 in the U.S. to 76 years in 2023.

The costs of health misinformation

Beliefs in such myths have come at the highest cost.

An estimated 319,000 COVID-19 deaths that occurred between January 2021 and April 2022 in the U.S. could have been prevented if those individuals had been vaccinated, according to a data dashboard from the Brown University School of Public Health. Misinformation and disinformation about COVID-19 vaccines alone have cost the U.S. economy an estimated US\$50 million to \$300 million per day in direct costs from hospitalizations, long-term illness, lives lost and economic losses from missed work.

Though vaccine myths and misunderstandings tend to dominate conversations about health, there is an abundance of misinformation on social media surrounding diets and eating disorders, smoking or substance use, chronic diseases and medical treatments.

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One major reason behind the spread of health misinformation is declining trust in science and government.

My team's research and that of others show that social media platforms have become go-to sources for health information, especially among adolescents and young adults. However, many people are not equipped to maneuver the maze of health misinformation.

For example, an analysis of Instagram and TikTok posts from 2022 to 2023 by The Washington Post and the nonprofit news site The Examination found that the food, beverage and dietary supplement industries paid dozens of registered dietitian influencers to post content promoting diet soda, sugar and supplements, reaching millions of viewers. The dietitians' relationships with the food industry were not always made clear to viewers.

Studies show that health misinformation spread on social media results in fewer people getting vaccinated and can also increase the risk of other health dangers such as disordered eating and unsafe sex practices and sexually transmitted infections. Health misinformation has even bled over into animal health, with a 2023 study finding that 53% of dog owners surveyed in a nationally representative sample report being skeptical of pet vaccines.

Health misinformation is on the rise

One major reason behind the spread of health misinformation is declining trust in science and government. Rising political polarization, coupled with historical medical mistrust among communities that have experienced and continue to experience unequal health care treatment, exacerbates preexisting divides.

The lack of trust is both fueled and reinforced by the way misinformation can spread today. Social media platforms allow people to form information silos with ease; you can curate your networks and your feed by unfollowing or muting contradictory views from your own and liking and sharing content that aligns with your existing beliefs and value systems.

By tailoring content based on past interactions, social media algorithms can unintentionally limit your exposure to diverse perspectives and generate a fragmented and incomplete understanding of information. Even more concerning, a study of misinformation spread on Twitter analyzing data from 2006 to 2017 found that falsehoods were 70% more likely to be shared than the truth and spread "further, faster, deeper and more broadly than the truth" across all categories of information.

How to combat misinformation

The lack of robust and standardized regulation of misinformation content on social media places the difficult task of discerning what is true or false information on individual users. We scientists and research entities can also do better in communicating our science and rebuilding trust, as my colleague and I have previously written. I also provide peer-reviewed recommendations for the important roles that parents/caregivers, policymakers and social media companies can play.

Below are some steps that consumers can take to identify and prevent health misinformation spread:

- **Check the source.** Determine the credibility of the health information by checking if the source is a reputable organization or agency such as the World Health Organization, the National Institutes of Health or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Other credible sources include an established medical or scientific institution or a peer-reviewed study in an academic journal. Be cautious of information that comes from unknown or biased sources.
- **Examine author credentials.** Look for qualifications, expertise and relevant professional affiliations for the author or authors presenting the information. Be wary if author information is missing or difficult to verify.
- **Pay attention to the date.** Scientific knowledge by design is meant to evolve as new evidence emerges. Outdated information may not be the most accurate. Look for recent data and updates that contextualize findings within the broader field.
- **Cross-reference to determine scientific consensus.** Cross-reference information across multiple reliable sources. Strong consensus across experts and multiple scientific studies supports the validity of health information. If a health claim on social media contradicts widely accepted scientific consensus and stems from unknown or un reputable sources, it is likely unreliable.
- **Question sensational claims.** Misleading health information often uses sensational language designed to provoke strong emotions to grab attention. Phrases like "miracle cure," "secret remedy" or "guaranteed results" may signal exaggeration. Be alert for potential conflicts of interest and sponsored content.
- **Weigh scientific evidence over individual anecdotes.** Prioritize information grounded in scientific studies that have undergone rigorous research methods, such as randomized controlled trials, peer review and validation. When done well with representative samples, the scientific process provides a reliable foundation for health recommendations compared to individual anecdotes. Though personal stories can be compelling, they should not be the sole basis for health decisions.
- **Talk with a health care professional.** If health information is confusing or contradictory, seek guidance from trusted health care providers who can offer personalized advice based on their expertise and individual health needs.
- **When in doubt, don't share.** Sharing health claims without validity or verification contributes to misinformation spread and preventable harm.

All of us can play a part in responsibly consuming and sharing information so that the spread of the truth outpaces the false. ■

EYEing Up Our Health

In taking vital steps to positively impact your health, many aspects of care may come to mind. It can be by taking care of our body physically or mentally but at times we might neglect one of the most precious senses- that is the sense of eyesight.

As we have celebrated World Sight Day 2023 in October, an occasion that aims to spread the importance of our eyes health. With the theme #LoveYourEyes, prioritizing the importance of your eye health. The goal is to get 10 million sight test pledges around the world, and we hope this will raise awareness and drive demand for better eye care services. Furthermore, here are simple steps that can help boost your eye health.

TAKING STEPS FOR BETTER EYE HEALTH

At any stage in life, people can be affected by multitude of eye conditions that can be concerning.

The common eye conditions are cataracts, dry eye disease, diabetic eye disease, glaucoma, macula degeneration or uncorrected refractive errors. Thus, to improve our eye health please consider these steps below:

A comprehensive eye examination.

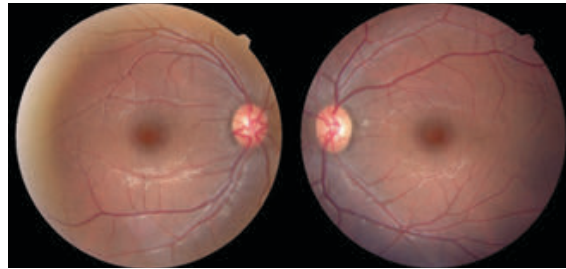
Having a comprehensive eye examination is the only way that can help detect diseases and conditions that cause vision loss and blindness. Some of these diseases have no warning signs, and if detected in the early stages have better outcomes for vision preservation. Diabetic patients are at risk of blindness and comprehensive eye examination is greatly needed to prevent irreversible blindness. Example of normal healthy retina (the layer at the back of the eye that acts like a film) vs retina related to diabetes that is vision threatening.

Knowledge regarding your family's eye health history.

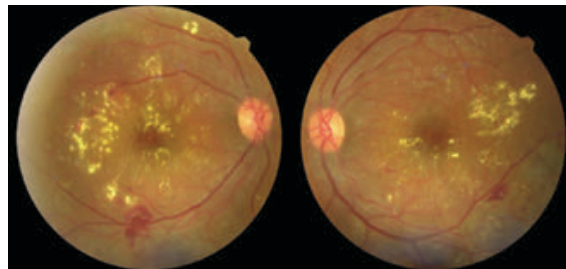
Certain conditions that affect the eye have a genetic role that can be passed down the family tree line. Having a conversation with family members about their vision history or if anyone has been diagnosed with a condition that disturbs their eyesight could help determine if you are at risk of developing a disease-related with hereditary trait.

Obtaining a Good Overall health.

A healthy lifestyle goes a long way in impacting the eye health. For instance, maintaining a healthy weight could avoid diabetes which inevitably could risk eyesight disturbances. A diabetic patient might benefit from healthy blood sugar control thus reducing the risk of blindness. Another healthy lifestyle is quitting smoking and eating a balanced diet will have a positive impact on overall eye health. A diet recommendation that contains omega-3 fatty acids (including DHA), copper, lutein, and zeaxanthin is necessary for the eye.



A picture of a normal healthy retina (A layer lining the back wall inside of the eye).



A picture of an unhealthy retina with the risk of blindness.

Having a comprehensive eye examination is the only way that can help detect diseases and conditions that cause vision loss and blindness.

Wearing proper protective eyewear equipment.

Protective eyewear not only could shield you from harmful ultraviolet rays of the sun, but protective eyewear like safety glasses during work and certain high-risk activities is an effective way to prevent eye-related injuries. In conjunction with World Sight Day 2023, the current theme focuses on the importance of eye care in the workplace.

Have an adequate rest.

In this digital era, increased screen time could lead to eye fatigue and strain. Practice the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes, look away about 20 feet in front of you for 20 seconds. This short exercise can help reduce eyestrain.

Practice clean hands and adequate handling of contact lenses.

The risk of eye infection can be greatly reduced if proper handling of contact lenses before and after usage. Disinfectant is necessary during usage as instructed and remove or replace them in timely order.

To conclude, the above steps could be done and hoping for the best of our god-gifted eyesight. As the saying "The eyes are windows to the world" and it's our responsibility to safeguard them for ourselves and our loved ones.

DR. Aliff Irwan Cheong is a Consultant Ophthalmologist practising in KMI KUANTAN MEDICAL CENTRE, Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia



Dr. Aliff Irwan Cheong

Elevating Benchmarks to Enhance Malaysia's Healthcare Ecosystem

The Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme creates a new paradigm by focusing on outcome-based medical excellence, best practices for service excellence and international branding.



Spearheaded by the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC) and endorsed by the Ministry of Health Malaysia, the Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme aspires to set new benchmarks in global healthcare travel. The programme is an integral part of the five-year Malaysia Healthcare Travel Industry Blueprint to provide the Best Healthcare Travel Experience by 2025 and aims to empower the country's private healthcare facilities to deliver seamless end-to-end patient experiences anchored upon outcome-based medical excellence, service excellence best practices and international branding.

Subsequent to rigorous assessment by international accreditation bodies, Joint Commission International (JCI) and IQVIA, four private hospitals, namely Institut Jantung Negara (IJN) or National Heart Institute, Island Hospital, Mahkota Medical Centre, and Subang Jaya Medical Centre, were unveiled as finalists of this first-of-its-kind programme.

Read on to discover the aspirations of these institutions, as they chart a course for growth and collaboration, with the goal of not only elevating healthcare standards but also positioning Malaysia as the leading destination for healthcare travel.



Institut Jantung Negara (National Heart Institute), Kuala Lumpur

According to Datuk Dr. Aizai Azan bin Abdul Rahim, the Chief Executive Office of IJN, the Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme provides a platform to support the national agenda of making Malaysia a top healthcare travel destination as well as improving IJN. "Apart from maintaining quality healthcare, we aspire to bring in the latest technologies and techniques for the benefit of the public. These are key in ensuring that we are at the top of clinical excellence and people's minds, so they are assured of receiving the best heart care," he said.

Island Hospital, Penang

Mr. Mark Wee, the Chief Executive Officer of Island Hospital, found that the Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme aligned well with the hospital's vision for growth. "We conceived the Island Medical City in 2016 as our commitment towards taking medical tourism in Malaysia to the next level. This ambitious project marks the evolution of Island Hospital into a leading regional quaternary healthcare provider offering the Best in Class to our patients. This vision dovetails perfectly with the goals of the Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme. With the opening of our new facilities, the Peel Wing in 2022, we are poised to achieve our goal of healthcare travellers making up to 80% of our revenue in the next few years," he shared.



Mahkota Medical Centre, Malacca

"We are one of the largest and most comprehensive hospitals in Southern Peninsular Malaysia. The investments we will be making with this programme will further reinforce Mahkota Medical Centre as one of the most reputable referral hospitals across South East Asia, and better serve local and regional communities. Our expansion plans include a beautiful seafront location, located in the heart of Melaka, a UNESCO world heritage site," said Mr. Stanley Lam, Chief Executive Officer of Health Management International (HMI) Malaysia, the parent company of Mahkota Medical Centre.

Subang Jaya Medical Centre, Selangor

"We see the Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme as an opportunity for collaboration and growth, not just for Subang Jaya Medical Centre but also for Malaysian healthcare globally. Through this Programme, we hope to contribute strongly to growing the healthcare travel market by at least 30% yearly. We are excited to take our capabilities to the next level to become a premier healthcare travel destination of choice," said Mr. Bryan Lin, the hospital's Chief Executive Officer.



By 2024, the four finalists will reach the midway point of the Acceleration Phase (2023 to 2025) of the programme. Throughout this three-year period, the hospitals are granted several incentives. These include fast-track facilitation to support the development milestones, flexibility of testing concepts with healthcare technology sandbox, access to programme mentors/advisors that will assist with programme development, progress assessment and monitoring, as well as a special Investment Tax Allowance (ITA) for qualifying capital expenditures.

The iconic Flagship Medical Tourism Hospital Programme is set to accelerate industry growth and pave the way for more sustainable and enhanced private healthcare services in the country. The programme's impact extends beyond individual finalists, stimulating diverse sectors and contributing to overall industry development. It catalyses a four-fold growth in the travel and tourism industry, providing economic opportunities and elevating Malaysia's private hospitals to global prominence in healthcare travel, ultimately establishing Malaysia as a reputable global healthcare brand.

For more information on Malaysia Healthcare and its services, please visit <https://malaysiahealthcare.org/> or visit its social feeds at: www.facebook.com/MHTCMalaysia or at LinkedIn (Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council).

Healthcare holds its own amid a tepid deal market, reaching \$60 billion in announced deal value

Bain & Company's Global Healthcare Private Equity Report shows how AI and innovative new therapies, such as GLP-1s, are transforming the investment landscape

NEW YORK—January 3, 2024—The healthcare sector continued to be a hub of private equity (PE) deal activity in 2023, reaching \$60 billion in announced deal value, despite higher global interest rates, inflationary pressures, and broader geopolitical uncertainty. Biopharma captured the bulk of dealmaking momentum, attributing for 48% of global deal value, including six deals in excess of \$2 billion. In 2024, investors will continue to bet on the transformative nature of generative AI; new modalities and innovative therapies, such as glucagon-like peptide-1 agonists (GLP-1s); and India as a place to deploy healthcare capital at scale.

These are among the findings of Bain & Company's 13th annual Global Healthcare Private Equity Report, published today.

“Compared to private equity dealmaking globally, we saw relative resilience in healthcare dealmaking last year,” said Kara Murphy, co-lead of Healthcare Private Equity at Bain & Company. “We suspect 2024 will be a year of playing catch up, as buyers and sellers work toward bridging the valuation gap. Innovation and technology will continue to be at the forefront of investment themes across the value chain. Investors should carefully consider the evolving role of AI, the impacts of GLP-1, and the growth of value-based care on their portfolio companies and new investments.”

Regional perspectives: India's age of healthcare is here

In the Asia-Pacific region, announced deal value



reached around \$14 billion. Investors seeking to manage geopolitical risk began to broaden their horizons, with India representing the largest share of announced deal value and continuing to see a long-term rise in biopharma-related activity. The nation is expected to host 22 healthcare deals in 2023, with deal value reaching \$4.6 billion, just below the \$4.7 billion in 2022. India's economic growth, business-friendly government, pharmaceuticals manufacturing landscape, and thriving middle class continue to propel investment.

Within North America, 2023 deal values landed around \$29 billion, with biopharma accounting for 25% of deal activity and 54% of deal value. Activity in provider businesses, which historically account for a large share of US deals, slowed due to inflationary and labor market pressures. Nonetheless, several provider deals closed across specialties such as oncology, orthopedics, and cardiology with the opportunity to drive ancillary expansions relatively insulated from broader healthcare and macroeconomic pressures.

In Europe, announced deal value fell approximately 44% year over year from \$25 billion in 2022 to \$14 billion in 2023. Constrained credit markets and continued disruption from labor and cost inflation dampened activity in the retail health and provider sectors. Europe also saw several announced processes that did not result in a transaction, as buyers and sellers failed to align on valuations.

"Despite the slower start to 2023, we see green shoots in the buyout market," said Nirad Jain, co-lead of Healthcare Private Equity at Bain & Company. "In 2024, sponsors will need to establish higher confidence in value creation opportunities earlier and think beyond pure commercial diligence. Successful investors will evaluate a wider set of factors early in their process to create value quickly."

Looking ahead to 2024

Across regions, investors will keep a few common themes in mind.

- **Generative AI to transform the healthcare sector.** Generative AI promises to drive significant productivity gains, improve patient and provider experience, lower administrative costs, speed biomedical research and drug development, and help develop next-generation diagnostic equipment. Big technology companies are partnering with healthcare organizations to apply generative AI, and investors are deploying capital in nascent companies built around the tool. Bain found that about half of the top 20 biopharmaceutical firms published press releases about generative AI in 2023.

While traditional, analytical AI has been used in healthcare for many years, generative AI is distinguished by its ability to create new content, summarize and translate existing content, and, ultimately, to "reason and plan." Among investors, venture capital and growth equity funds have



been deploying capital in companies built around generative AI as a core competency. Investors need to consider generative AI's disruptive potential on portfolio companies and new investments and identify opportunities to take advantage of the technology.

- **Healthcare IT provides attractive upside potential with lower downside risk.** Despite deal volume dropping around 23% from 2022 and buyout activity slowing, healthcare information technology (HCIT) continues to attract investment due to its ability to drive innovation and offset macro factors such as inflation, labor shortages, and reimbursement headwinds.

Excitement around digitalization, following the outbreak of Covid-19, resulted in a slew of portfolio companies still early in their holding periods. Despite the decline in transactions, HCIT represents 10% of healthcare sector deal volume, seeing sizeable deals in 2023. Looking ahead, providers will prioritize increasing their returns on investment, with revenue cycle management, clinical workflow optimization, and patient engagement as top priorities for new investments.

- **Life sciences: navigating the demand for glucagon-like peptide-1 agonists (GLP-1s).** Sales in the GLP-1 class of medications surged in 2023. Looking ahead, three implications confront PE investors, given the potential market for these drugs. First, demand for inputs or services supporting the manufacturing of GLP-1 therapies will likely increase. Second, an expanded ecosystem to support patients will be needed, including services to identify, qualify, and enroll eligible patients, as well as physical or digital health platforms to support patients on these therapies. Finally, investments with business models based on high rates of obesity could see long term growth projections decline.

We suspect 2024 will be a year of playing catch up, as buyers and sellers work toward bridging the valuation gap.

The press release was provided by Bain & Company.

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.



Value for Money

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



Clinical Indicator Program

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



Leading Customer Service

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



Sustainable Improvements

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



More Descriptive, Less Prescriptive

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



More Connection

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



Flexible & Collaborative

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



Contextualised & Localised

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



More Options for More Organisations

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

GlobalHealth Asia-Pacific Awards 2023

Penang Adventist Hospital is honoured to be awarded the Nuclear Medicine Service Provider of The Year in Asia-Pacific by GlobalHealth Asia-Pacific.

Being the first private hospital in Northern Malaysia to establish a comprehensive Nuclear Medicine Centre, we are committed to offering a wide range of diagnostic and therapy procedures to benefit our patients. Soon we will be operating the first Digital PET-CT scanner in Northern Malaysia, which is beneficial for patients in detecting the early onset of disease and monitoring patient's response towards oncology treatment.





Navigating B3 Consulting's Vision for Property Management and Wellness Concierge for 2024 and Beyond

Amidst the dynamic landscape of the hospitality and wellness industry, B3 Consulting leads in the dynamic hospitality and wellness industry with a vision that integrates personalized wellness tourism strategies. The core focus remains on enhancing the hospitality experience through dedicated property management and wellness concierge services.



Ayumi Villa

Acknowledging the growing significance of wellness in current tourism trends, B3 Consulting strives to create a strategic plan for integrating wellness concierge services dedicated to holistic wellbeing. This proactive approach caters to the changing preferences of contemporary travelers seeking immersive and health-conscious experiences.



Ayumi Villa

The hospitality industry has transformed with technology, and B3 Consulting acknowledges the significance of seamless interaction. Through its personalized digital platform, the Choose2Cuz website, designed for easy access, clients can explore various properties for daily, monthly, or yearly rent. Inquiries, site visits, and direct bookings are facilitated through the platform. Whether it's room arrangements, curated travel experiences, or personalized wellness programs, B3 caters to the distinct needs and interests of each client. Choose2Cuz ensures accessibility by integrating each property listing with social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, prioritizing trust and credibility in relationships with clients and agent partners.

As B3 Consulting expands its business plan in 2024 and beyond, the forecast is not just about meeting industry standards; it's about surpassing them. By anchoring its business plan in property management and wellness tourism, B3 aims to reshape the future of personalized wellness experiences and property management. The commitment to innovation, personalization, and client-centricity sets B3 towards success in the dynamic hospitality and wellness industry.

contact us for inquiries



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Glaucoma



76 million glaucoma sufferers worldwide in 2020.

Glaucoma tends to be symptomless, but in the last stage patients will experience gradual blurred vision, and there is a risk of complete blindness if left untreated.

Glaucoma can be treated with **eye drops, laser treatment or surgery** to prevent further visual lost.









Preparing for your eye test

- ✓ Get sufficient sleep 6 – 8 hours the night before testing
- ✓ Not drive themselves to the appointment
- ✓ Bring sunglasses for use after the test

For more information

<https://www.samitivejhospitals.com>  +66 2022 2222  Samitivej Hospitals

High risk factors for glaucoma

-  Over age 40
-  High eye pressure
-  Family history of the condition
-  Steroid use
-  Extreme myopia or hyperopia
-  Previous eye injury



Dr. Chirattisuang Thitikulwanich

Ophthalmology
Expertise : Glaucoma