NUMed makes a difference

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Dr Masliza Zaid spoke on current issues and statistics regarding HIV in Malaysia at the recent Rock The Red Ribbon Together community event to commemorate World AIDS Day at NUMed Malaysia’s campus in Iskandar Puteri, Johor.

Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia’s civic-minded approach gives students and local community a boost EVERY year on Dec 1, the world commemorates World AIDS Day. People around the world unite to show support for people living with HIV and to remember those who have died from AIDS-related illnesses. And that is precisely what the Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia (NUMed) did as well.

For the first time, NUMed’s Voltage Society organised the Rock The Red Ribbon Together community event to commemorate World AIDS Day at NUMed Malaysia’s campus in Iskandar Puteri, Johor, featuring two talks by experts: Dr Masliza Zaid (Consultant in Infectious Diseases and GIM, Hospital Sultanah Aminah, Johor) and Dr Ed Ong (Consultant Physician in Infectious Diseases and GIM, NUMed).

With the belief that communities can make a difference, it was the Voltage Society’s mission (Voltage stands for Volunteer to Aspire Generation) to create awareness as well as highlight latest views and findings on HIV/AIDS.
According to Chen Yong Jie, logistics officer at Voltage, the main aim of spreading awareness to the public and students of NUMed was successfully met. “We are very pleased with the end results as around 100 students and staff from the uni and both government and private hospitals came; and we hope that the talks were able to deepen their understanding of the virus and the disease it causes.”

Both Dr Masliza and Dr Ong are very much involved in the care and management of people with HIV, especially in Johor, which presently has the second highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Malaysia. NUMed’s Dr Ong also has extensive experience in the medicine of HIV internationally.

NUMed has always been at the forefront of research and teaching, its reputation being of the highest international quality, and so the opportunity to hear Dr Ong share his experience was not one to be missed.

In his address, “A Journey into the Medicine of HIV”, Dr Ong, who describes himself as a frontline foot soldier trying to bring healthcare to countries that have limited resources, shared his personal journey and his involvement in the field of HIV for the last three decades, from his undergraduate MBBS years, through to his specialist training right up to today.

He spoke about how AIDS was first defined in 1982, just a year before he himself had graduated from Newcastle University in Newcastle upon Tyne, as well as about the early years of being a doctor in England, and his interest in treating patients with tuberculosis and HIV then.

Dr Ong traced how his experience went from being a doctor treating patients who had literally no treatment available to them in the early 1980s, to current times when HIV/AIDS is “a curable, treatable, chronic long-term condition”.

“Today,” he said, “with good healthcare, patients are able to live a normal life. And an event like this brings the key messages of awareness, health education to professionals not only in health but across the whole spectrum, and the wider general public especially in areas of major advances in prevention, treatment and management of HIV globally, including Malaysia.

“Such messages including best practices to reduce stigma and discrimination including those hard to reach population are pertinent to the younger generation especially those in healthcare.”

Dr Ed Ong addressing the audience during his talk on ‘A Journey into the Medicine of HIV’.
In her talk, Dr Masliza highlighted current issues and statistics regarding HIV in Malaysia. The first reported case of HIV dates back to 1986. According to the Malaysian Society For HIV Medicine, in 2018, there were 118,883 reported cases, and 87,000 people living with HIV in Malaysia. From this figure only 86% are aware of their status and only 55.2% are receiving medication for their condition.

One of the main points that the doctors made at the Rock the Red Ribbon event was that with proper healthcare, and medication such as antiretroviral therapy (ART), the landscape of HIV has changed drastically over the years.

Today it is possible for someone with HIV to lead a normal and long life. One of the most important ways to eradicate HIV is to remove the stigma and discrimination associated with the condition, and to that end, events such as Rock the Red Ribbon are so important for community awareness.

The Voltage Society, which organised the event, is an established society under NUMed with the aim of making volunteering and social work opportunities accessible to its members, something the university feels strongly about in its quest to produce well-rounded, civic-minded graduates. Earlier this year, Voltage picked up The Social Justice and Policy Academy Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Community at the Pride of Newcastle University Awards 2019, and Society of the Year at the NUMed Awards 2019.

Rock the Red Ribbon was one of six events planned this year by Voltage. The others included Project Guide (teaching at a children’s home in Kampung Bahrur), Project Cerebral Palsy (visiting the Spastic Children’s Association of Johor), and Project Soup Kitchen (helping the homeless in JB town).

Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia was established by Newcastle University UK, in Johor in 2011. The campus provides undergraduate degrees in Medicine (MBBS) and Biomedical Sciences (BSc), as well as opportunities for foundation and postgraduate study. The programmes of study are identical to Newcastle’s UK-based provision, and lead to the award of the same degrees, conferred by Newcastle University, UK. The MBBS and BSc programmes also offer opportunities for periods of study in Britain.

By choosing to study at NUMed Malaysia, students will obtain a reputable British qualification, from an internationally recognised university, at a cost significantly less than that of studying for the same degrees overseas. Students are also entitled for double accreditation from GMC (UK) and MMC (Malaysia).

Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia is accepting applications for its May and September intake for Foundation in Biological and Biomedical Sciences, as well as September intake for BSc (Hons) Biomedical Sciences (BMS), Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS). You can apply now or during the Open Day at NUMed on either March 14 or 21.

For more information, email admissions@newcastle.edu.my, call +607-555 3800, WhatsApp +6011-1231 5411/ +6012-784 9456 or visit www.ncl.ac.uk/numed/

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