



PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • 10 FEB 2022

Reinforce Malaysia's Plan Against Omicron

The Malaysian Health Coalition (MHC) is concerned with the [increasing number of COVID-19 cases](#) with the Omicron wave. The Health Minister [predicted](#) that Malaysia may see an [infectivity rate of 1.6 and daily caseload of 30,000](#) by March 2022 if no proper measures are imposed by the government.

We urge the following:

1. Accelerate Non-Mandatory Vaccination Programme for Children

We support the government's launch of the COVID-19 vaccination programme for children between 5-11 years old, ensuring Malaysia to be one of the countries who have planned to expand COVID-19 vaccinations for children such as [Singapore](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), and [Australia](#). The schedule comprises two doses of Pfizer's – BioNTech's Cominarty vaccine, administered 8 weeks apart. We ask the government to consider reducing the interval between these two doses to 3 weeks for children with comorbidities. We also expect a well-executed children's vaccination programme to protect vulnerable children of all socio-economic classes. We must protect children, given that [school clusters](#) are increasing upon the reopening of schools in 2022. While there are side-effects of vaccinations and it appears to be rare, the government must increase their risk communications efforts with parents to increase vaccine confidence.

2. Amplify Local COVID-19 Genomic Surveillance

From November 2021 until January 2022, based on the GISAID database, Malaysia sequenced only [0.48%](#) of all positive COVID-19 cases. This is less than the United Kingdom at 8.2% and Singapore at 2.1%. Malaysia needs more genomic surveillance especially with the surging number of Omicron cases. We urge the government to invest in outsourcing genomic surveillance to private laboratories and build meaningful collaborations among the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) and University laboratories. This will boost whole genome sequencing (WGS) capacity to identify Omicron cases and other emerging variants. As viruses constantly mutate, understanding the degree of threat of a variant can help build the right public health measures. We have also highlighted this matter in our previous [Joint Statement](#) of 15 December 2021.

3. Increase Availability of Antiviral Drugs

We urge the government to increase the availability of US Food and Drug Administration approved [antiviral drugs](#), Nirmatrelvir and Molnupiravir, in Malaysia as part of managing COVID-19. This must be supported by clear clinical protocols to decide which doctor should prescribe and which patient should receive these expensive antiviral drugs. Increasing availability of drugs must not discriminate against the poor or those in rural areas. We caution the government to be mindful of the unintended consequences of widely available antiviral drugs, such as ignoring SOPs or vaccinations. Therefore, crisis communication efforts must be in place to ensure the Rakyat remains vigilant.

Although Omicron is less deadly than Delta, there is still a significant risk to vulnerable populations, the unvaccinated or the unboosted. We urge the public and the government to take Omicron seriously and strengthen their two-way communication to ensure the public follows relevant SOPs and the TRIIS framework of the Health Ministry (Test, Report, Isolate, Inform and Seek Help).

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition (Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org)

10 February 2022

Full signature list:

Organisations

1. Academy of Medicine Malaysia
2. Association of Malaysian Optometrists
3. College of Anaesthesiologists
4. College of Ophthalmologists
5. College of Surgeons Academy of Medicine of Malaysia
6. Dermatology Society of Malaysia
7. IKRAM Health Malaysia
8. Lung Cancer Network of Malaysia
9. Malaysian Association for Bronchology and Interventional Pulmonology
10. Malaysian Association of Clinical Biochemists
11. Malaysian Medical Association
12. Malaysian Paediatric Association
13. Malaysian Pharmacists Society
14. Malaysian Public Health Physician Association
15. Malaysian Society for Harm Reduction
16. Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists
17. Malaysian Society of Clinical Psychology
18. Malaysian Society of Intensive Care
19. Malaysian Society of Occupational Safety and Health
20. Malaysian Society of Ophthalmology
21. Malaysian Thoracic Society
22. Medical Mythbusters Malaysia
23. Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia
24. Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Malaysia
25. Perinatal Society of Malaysia
26. Public Health Malaysia

Individuals

1. Assoc Prof Dr Uma Devi Palanisamy
2. Dato' Dr Jahizah Hassan
3. Dato' Dr Amar Singh-HSS
4. Dr Khor Swee Kheng
5. Prof Dr Mohd Zamrin Dimon
6. Prof Dr Roslina Abdul Manap
7. Prof Dr Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh
8. Prof Dr Zaleha Abdullah Mahdy

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