

MMA holds Kuching-Bintulu cycling event to raise funds for cervical cancer awareness programme

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Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai

KUCHING (March 10): The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) will be holding the SepedaAmal Borneo – a seven-day bicycle ride from Kuching to Bintulu from July 15 to 22 2023 – to raise funds in support of ‘Removing Obstacles to Cervical Screening’ programme (or Program ROSE) and to increase public awareness of cervical cancer.

The cycling route covers more than 700 kilometres (km) and all cyclists participating will need to have a reasonable level of fitness, said MMA in a press statement yesterday.

The average distance covered per day will be between 100-150km at a speed of between 25-30km per hour and the ride will be capped at a maximum number of 16 cyclists.

Designed specifically for Malaysian women, Program ROSE is an innovative cervical screening programme that integrates self-sampling, primary HPV testing and digital health platform using mobile technology, ensuring women who require follow-up are linked to care for treatment, if necessary.

This evidence-based approach can help save lives and spare women and their families from the suffering and financial hardship associated with cervical cancer.

“We hope to increase the awareness on the importance of self-screening for cervical cancer. MMA hopes corporate organisations and the public will give their support towards this initiative aimed to raise awareness on one of the most common cancers among women,” MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said in the statement.

Funds raised from SepedaAmal Borneo will go to MMA Foundation and be channelled to ROSE Foundation for its Program ROSE and cervical cancer outreach community development drive.

In Malaysia, cervical cancer is the third most common cancer in women after breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

Cervical cancer is caused by high-risk HPV (Human Papillomavirus) types and is the second most common cancer affecting women in the productive age of 15 to 44.

“Although Pap Smear screening is available at many healthcare centres, only 25 per cent of eligible women had taken the test from 2013 to 2017. We hope that through these efforts, more will be encouraged to take the important step of testing,” Dr Muruga said.

“It is always best to be up to date on your health status so that the best health outcomes can be achieved,” he added.

ROSE Foundation chairperson Prof Dato’ Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, however, said cervical cancer can be detected and prevented early with accurate HPV PCR self-sampling and appropriate follow-up as well as treatment.

“Regrettably, most women are not screened for cervical cancer regularly with two-thirds (67 per cent) of cases being presented in the late stage. We want to change that, and our goal is to encourage more women to undergo this self-screening for HPV to allow for early detection of abnormalities and subsequently be linked to care,” she said.

“Program ROSE’s quick, simple, painless and accurate HPV PCR self-sampling screening goes beyond just screening. By linking the underserved and underprivileged women population to treatment, it will boost the confidence and encourage more women to take the test,” she explained.

“We would like to thank MMA for selecting ROSE Foundation as the recipient of this year’s “SepedaAmal Borneo 2023” fundraising cycling event.

“The support and contributions from generous individuals and organisations will enable Program ROSE to screen more women annually.

“Together, we can help make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of many women in Malaysia,” she said.

“Every little bit is a step towards eliminating cervical cancer in Malaysia,” she added.

Those who wish to contribute by participating as a cyclist or making a one-off donation can go to website <https://bit.ly/SAB2023cyclist4>.

Bank transfer details for donations are obtainable by contacting Rafikah Nordin and/or Dr Timothy Cheng at 03-40411375 or email to SAB2023@mma.org.my.

All donations or financial sponsorship are tax deductible.

All funds collected will be channelled towards the ROSE Foundation after covering operating costs.