

More vaccination efforts needed to avoid widespread infection



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Otherwise, it will disrupt the healthcare services particularly at the primary care level, MMA president says

by AUFA MARDHIAH / pic by TMR FILE

MALAYSIA needs to intensify efforts in providing Covid-19 booster and vaccines, especially in the worst-hit states by Omicron to avoid overburdening healthcare as well as widespread infection.

Although the number of serious and critically ill patients remains low, it can still disrupt the healthcare services particularly at the primary care level where Categories 1 and 2 cases are being seen and treated, Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Koh Kar Chai said.

“Though most cases are asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic, there is still the risk of some contracting long Covid-19 where they can have prolonged symptoms.

People can suffer a great deal of discomfort with these prolonged symptoms.

Also, though most cases are mild with a low percentage of severe cases, if the total number of cases were to rise rapidly, we may see more hospital admissions which may overburden the healthcare system,” he told *The Malaysian Reserve (TMR)* recently.

“The booster rate in Kelantan is very low and this needs to be improved as cases can rise quickly in the state with Omicron. On the other hand, Sarawak should be in a good position against this wave of Covid-19 as they have a high booster rate,” he said.

Health DG Tan Sri Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said based on data from Jan 24 to Feb 21, unvaccinated individuals at all age groups are at the highest risk of being infected with serious symptoms compared to those who have been inoculated or received the booster shot.

“There are fewer cases with severe effects and even deaths involving vaccinated individuals who have also received the booster shot compared to unvaccinated and vaccinated but unboosted individuals,” he said in a statement yesterday.

As of Monday, more than 14 million or 59.8% of the adult population in the country have received the booster dose under the booster programme, which began on Oct 1 last year.

To date, the intensive care unit (ICU) bed usage in Johor, Kelantan, Kuala Lumpur (KL) and Melaka has surpassed 50% of the capacity.

“The ICU bed usage in Johor is now at 70%, followed by Kelantan (61%), KL (58%) and Melaka (54%),” he said.

Malaysia recorded 25,099 Covid-19 cases on Monday, bringing the cumulative figure to around 3.25 million.

Only 100 cases were in Categories 3, 4 and 5, while the rest were in Categories 1 and 2.

Meanwhile, the Community Volunteer Team (engagement and empowerment) against Covid-19 chairman Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar believes more focus should be given on the trend of the severe cases of Category 3, 4 and 5.

“The public should not only focus on the number of daily cases and speculate things from it. Rather than seeing the numbers and unsure of the situation, the public is advised to maintain the standard operating procedures (SOPs) wherever they go and get vaccinated.”

Dr Zainal said state authorities should also focus on Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah and Johor due to its peculiarities like geographical and ethnic composition, and should see the real cost and concern of the community.

Due to this, status updates should be tackled differently from national participation.

“I don’t think we have hit the peak yet as cases are continuing to rise. We will know we have hit the peak once there is a downtrend in cases,” he told *TMR*.

He reiterated calls for the people to adhere to the SOPs and look out for the severeness of the case category compared to worrying excessively on the case expectations by March.