

Malaysia's First World Digestive Health Day Launched

For the first time, Malaysia joined the world to celebrate World Digestive Health Day, an event created by the World Gastroenterology Organisation, an occasion that is commemorated annually on May 29. The Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology and Hepatology (MSGH) initiated this commemorative event in Malaysia in view of alarming prevalence of digestive system diseases cases in the country.

Malaysia's inaugural World Digestive Health Day celebration stems from a collaboration with three other professional bodies; the Malaysian Paediatric Association (MPA) Positive Parenting Programme, Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM), and the National Cancer Council (MAKNA).

Positive Parenting programme under the Malaysian Paediatric Association is Malaysia's first authoritative and holistic parent education programme by experts. Nutrition Month Malaysia is a nationwide healthy lifestyle programme by the Nutrition Society of Malaysia, the Malaysian Dietitians' Association and the Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity, and fully supported by the Ministry of Health, Malaysia.

Held at 1 Utama Shopping Centre, a top-end and hugely popular shopping mall in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, World Digestive Health Day was officiated by YBhg Datin Dr Rogayah Haji Bakri, Deputy Director, Health Technology Assessment Unit, Medical Development Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia who represented the Deputy Minister of Health, YB Datuk Rosnah Haji Abdul Rashid Shirlin.

Delivering the speech on behalf of the Deputy Minister of Health, Datin Dr Rogayah stated: "Digestive health is an area of health that needs to be given immediate attention. In 2007, digestive system diseases ranked 7th among the principal causes of hospitalisation in Ministry of Health (MOH) hospitals and ranked 7th among the principal causes of death in MOH hospitals."

The World Digestive Health Day was celebrated with the aim of prevention through education. Through this event, the MSGH, its collaborators and sponsor hope to increase the awareness of issues relating to digestive health and digestive diseases, among health care professionals, the general public and the government.

Activities planned throughout the three-day event, held from 29 to 31 May, were targeted at families. The activities included exhibitions, talks by gastroenterologists, dietary counselling by nutritionists and dieticians, and educational games for children.

As a result of the experts' endeavour to make information on digestive health more accessible to the general public, the event also witnessed the launch of MSGH's very first booklet for the adult population, entitled– '*Caring for Your Digestive System*'. Through this booklet, MSGH aims to put the spotlight on common digestive health problems afflicting adults as well as provide information on early detection and tips on how to practise a healthy lifestyle.

The second MSGH booklet targeted at parents with young children entitled – '*Guide to Children's Digestive Health*' booklet is MSGH's first collaborative effort with Positive Parenting. Both booklets were distributed to the public for free. The booklets can also be obtained from hospitals and private clinics or from the World Digestive Health Day Secretariat, which can be contacted at 03-5621 1408.

Other activities during the event included free nutrition screening activities, Body Mass Index checks and body fat percentage checks by the Nutrition Month Malaysia. The National Cancer Council (MAKNA) was present to help raise public awareness on colon cancer. Members of MAKNA were available during the three-day event to provide information and advice on the prevention and management of colon cancer. There was also a gastro-tools display section, where an endoscopy and faecal occult blood test kit were displayed to the public.

Other mass media initiatives included educational feature article contributions, press advertorials in collaboration with the sponsor, radio/TV interviews, and radio/TV community educational messages.

World Digestive Health Day Malaysia 2009 and all its digestive health educational initiatives were sponsored by an educational grant from Vitagen, the market leader of cultured milk in Malaysia since 1977. This year (2009), Vitagen launched Vitagen Healthy Tummies Programme (VHTP), an educational vehicle established to facilitate the promotion of digestive health amongst Malaysians and increase awareness of digestive health diseases in the community.



MSGH & collaborators welcoming the arrival of Datin Dr Rugayah binti Haji Bakri, Deputy Director, Health Technology Assessment Unit, from the Ministry of Health. From left – Mr Michael Ong (VITAGEN), Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail (Positive Parenting), Datin Dr Rugayah bt Hj Bakri, Deputy Director, Health Technology Assessment Unit, Medical Development Division from the Ministry of Health, Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi, President of the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology (MSGH), Ms Tan Yoke Hwa (Nutrition Month Malaysia), Mr S. B. Cheah (VITAGEN) and Mr Vemanna Apannah (MAKNA)



Unveiling of the World Digestive Health Day 2009 logo by Datin Dr Rugayah binti Haji Bakri, Deputy Director, Health Technology Assessment Unit, from the Ministry of Health, accompanied by Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi, President of the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology.



Presentation of the mock cover of the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology's booklet "Caring for Your Digestive System" in conjunction with World Digestive Health Day 2009, from Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi to Datin Dr Rugayah binti Haji Bakri, Representative of the Ministry of Health.



Datin Dr Rugayah binti Haji Bakri (in the centre) posing with the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology's booklet entitled "Caring for Your Digestive System" and Positive Parenting's booklet entitled "Guide to Children's Digestive Health", flanked by Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi posing with mock cover of MSGH's "Caring for Your Digestive System" booklet on her right and Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail posing with mock cover of Positive Parenting's booklet "Guide to Children's Digestive Health" on her left.



Signing of commemorative plaque by the World Digestive Health Day organiser, collaborators and sponsor (VITAGEN). From left – Mr Michael Ong (VITAGEN), Mr Vemanna Appannah (MAKNA), Ms Tan Yoke Hwa (Nutrition Month Malaysia), Datin Dr Rugayah bt Hj Bakri, Deputy Director, Health Technology Assessment Unit, Medical Development Division from the Ministry of Health, Dato' Dr Muhammad Radzi, President of the Malaysian Society of Gastroenterology & Hepatology (MSGH), Datuk Dr Zulkifli Ismail (Positive Parenting) and Mr S. B. Cheah (VITAGEN).



Gastro nurses were present the World Digestive Health Day Roadshow to pass out surveys on digestive problems and to encourage the public to answer quiz questions based on the educational posters.



Endoscopy display.



Faecal occult blood test kit display