

Programme to promote community pharmacy-based diabetes management

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In conjunction with World Diabetes Day 2019, health biotech company Holista CollTech Ltd (Holista) and CARiNG Pharmacy Group Bhd announced a 10-year collaboration on a pharmacy-based platform for better diabetes management.

Under the *Live Well with Diabetes* programme, the two companies will jointly contribute to several initiatives to educate the public on preventing and living with the disease. In the short term, these will include regular live health talks in the first half of 2020, information sharing events via radio and the Internet, and the co-launching of Holista's prediabetic and diabetic food products in CARiNG outlets. The partners also aim to distribute a set of comprehensive guidelines for a healthier lifestyle to patients with diabetes and their family members.

In addition to public education efforts, Holista will also contribute to continuing professional development (CPD) for

CARiNG pharmacists via the company's Pharmacist Diabetes Forum, according to company representatives. The partnership aims to highlight the roles and responsibilities of community pharmacists as health advisors, particularly in the area of diabetes management.

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According to Chong Yeow Siang, managing director, CARiNG Pharmacy Group Bhd., the collaboration is a further step in a series of ongoing diabetes management efforts provided by the pharmacy group since 2014. These efforts have included multiple awareness campaigns, focus group workshops, one-stop corners for diabetes resources

in 33 outlets, an in-house virtual diabetes management system, and a pilot 3-month nutritional therapy programme to address HbA_{1c} reduction and weight loss, he said.

Speaking at the official launch of the collaboration, Dato' Dr Rajen Manicka, Holista founder and chief executive officer, said pharmacists have the potential to provide valuable services to patients and families with diabetes in terms of lifestyle coaching, not just screening and treatment.

"Modern medicine is good at telling people what their health situation is and what medicines to take, but when it comes to how to live with diabetes, we're lousy," said Rajen. "For many, when they become a diabetic, it's akin to a death sentence ... there is no one to guide them through what comes next. I believe that pharmacists can play important roles in that space."

Rajen added that Holista had chosen partnership with CARiNG due to its being the current largest employer of pharmacists in the private sector, with over 238 pharmacists actively covering 132 outlets nationwide.

In a statement issued at the launch, Datin Mariani Ahmad Nizaruddin, vice president I of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Society (MPS), said that an estimated 20% of more than 16,000 registered pharmacists in Malaysia are engaged in community pharmacy practice. Over 2,300 community pharmacies were registered at the end of 2018, of which 746 were chain pharmacies.

"Community pharmacists play an active role in advising patients on nutrition, healthy diets, and diabetes condition management, as well as providing screening services and self-care tests," Mariani added.



Chong Yeow Siang (second from left), and Dato' Dr Rajen Manicka (centre) with CARiNG Pharmacy staff at the launch of the *Live Well With Diabetes* collaboration between the two companies.