

EMPOWERED! Launches Colon Cancer Screening and Education for 3 Underprivileged Communities

PRESS RELEASE

EMPOWERED! The Cancer Advocacy Society of Malaysia

“Some 20,000 residents reached with the message that early detection is key to tackling colon cancer”

The Cancer Advocacy Society of Malaysia recently launched the 2011 Colon Cancer Screening Community Project aimed at spreading the awareness on colon cancer among 3 underprivileged communities in the Selayang and Gombak areas. Some 20,000 residents at PPR Intan Baiduri, PPR Taman Wahyu and PPR Taman Prima Selayang will be reached with the message that early detection is key to tackling colon cancer.

The event was officiated by Dr. Lokman Hakim bin Sulaiman, Deputy Director-General of Public Health, Ministry of Health who represented the Deputy Minister of Health, Yang Berhormat Datuk Rosnah Bt Hj Abd Rashid Shirlin who were unable to grace the event. He was accompanied by Dr. Christina Ng, President and Founder of EMPOWERED!, YBhg Datin Paduka Khatijah Sulieman, President of Rumah Amal Cheshire Selangor, Encik Razmy Shah bin Sulaiman, Chairman of PPR Taman Wahyu and Encik Shahrudin Mohd Yusof, Secretary of the Intan Baiduri Residents' Association.

The 2011 Colon Cancer Screening Community Project consists of an educational workshop and onsite screening activities. Those 50 years and above were offered the opportunity to enlist in a colon cancer screening program using the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) to detect if they may be suffering from colon cancer although symptoms may not be visible.

The 2011 Colon Cancer Screening Community Project is in its second year running. The maiden program last year was a success and led to lives being saved through early detection of colon cancer. This year, the project has been expanded to include more communities, and a detailed and elaborate blueprint has been outlined to encourage greater participation.

Dr. Christina Ng, President and Founder of EMPOWERED! who is the brainchild of the project shared, “To ensure good uptake among the community, we have reached each of these communities on a personal level and spent considerable time in understanding them and explaining about the various activities under the program. Numerous training workshops over the weekend are conducted with the community leaders who act as the conduit with residents. They play an important role to encourage residents to enroll for the screening process. We also conducted two training workshops for the volunteers to guide them through the whole process of the project.”

“The project mounted some 200 volunteers from collaborating organizations who served as door knockers, registrars and counselors. We are truly grateful to the volunteers who contributed to the success

of this initiative. At the recent registration exercise among the communities, door knockers spent 3 hours knocking on doors encouraging residents to register while registrars, who are stationed at the registration booths, collected medical information from the residents and filled up the consent form for them. Some 600 people have been co-opted into the FIT screening process,” she added.

The screening process, which involves a FIT kit, is a test that detects occult (hidden) blood in the stool. This test reacts to part of the human hemoglobin protein, which is found on red blood cells. During the workshop on 20 November 2011, the residents will be given the FIT kit. The block leaders would then collect them and send to the lab for processing.

EMPOWERED! works with the community leaders to implement this project in three phases:

Pre-Selection

Residents aged 50 years and above and those with a family history of colon cancer will be invited to register for the screening program. Registration booths will be set up and conducted at the respective flats. The registered patients will subsequently be given information about the date and venue of the screening program workshop. Data on their medical history and diet are collected in a form by the registrars.

Workshop

The workshop, held on 20 November 2011 at PPR Taman Wahyu Community Hall, aimed to educate the residents about the importance of healthy living, eating well and colon cancer screening. They were instructed on how to use the Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) kit that were distributed during the workshop.

Results and Counselling

The used FIT kits will then be collected and sent for processing. Patients that have abnormal test results will be channeled for a follow-up colonoscopy at appointed screening hospitals. Counselors will individually contact and arrange for personal counseling sessions for patients that have abnormal test results. This will be done at their respective homes. For patients confirmed with cancer, a second meeting is set up by the counselors to discuss options moving forward for medical and financial support.

Commenting on the project, Encik Shahrudin Mohd Yusof, Secretary of the Intan Baiduri Residents' Association said, “I applaud this initiative by EMPOWERED! who have worked closely with the Residents' Association to bring such a beneficial colon cancer screening program to the community right at our doorstep. Without such a personalized approach, many residents would not be able to afford it on their own nor would they think of doing it. The numbers registering for the program is very encouraging. We believe the program will benefit and create awareness on colon cancer and encourage the



The 2011 launch of the Colon Cancer Screening Community Project was held on 9 November 2011 at the Hilton Petaling Jaya hotel, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia.

community to observe a healthy lifestyle as well.

Mr. Fung Teck Hong, a volunteer counselor shared, “It is my second time being involved and I find it to be a fulfilling experience. In this project, we ‘walk with those who have positive results’ to ensure they are not alone in this journey. We ensure that we connect them with a hospital for them to get the right follow-up treatment. A relationship has been established with the residents and often, they even ask us into the doctor’s consultation room to be with them.”

Mr. Mugilan, a medical student who volunteered as a door knocker expressed that he liked being involved in community services and it was both a fun as well as a learning experience to help residents become aware of colon cancer. He said it was challenging to knock on their doors and explain the whole process.

According to Dr. Christina Ng, who is also a Consultant Medical Oncologist, “One of EMPOWERED!’s key objectives is to help these communities appreciate that their health is in their hands. We only empower them with screening opportunities and share with them the knowledge that early detection is essential to tackling any possibility of colon cancer,” she said.

Colon cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, is the disease that affects the cells from the colon and rectum, creating a malignant or benign tumor.

According to the World Health Organization, close to 610,000 men and

women died from colon cancer in 2008. In addition, it is estimated that 141,210 men and women will be diagnosed with colon cancer and 49,380 men and women will die of colon cancer in 2011, according to the National Cancer Institute in the US. According to the National Cancer Society Malaysia, colon cancer is the second most common cancer affecting about 2,900 Malaysians each year, mainly Chinese males mostly above the age of 50 but it can also occur to anyone. It is also the second most common cause of cancer-related mortality. Colon cancer incidence among Malaysians increased over age but peaked after 50 years in both males and females.

For more information on the EMPOWERED! Colon Cancer Screening Community Project, please visit www.empowered.org.my, email operations@empowered.org.my or call the project hotline at 03 – 6142 4001.

About EMPOWERED!

EMPOWERED! is a non-profit organization committed to saving lives, preventing cancer and eliminating suffering amongst the poor in Malaysia. For more information, please visit: <http://www.empowered.org.my>

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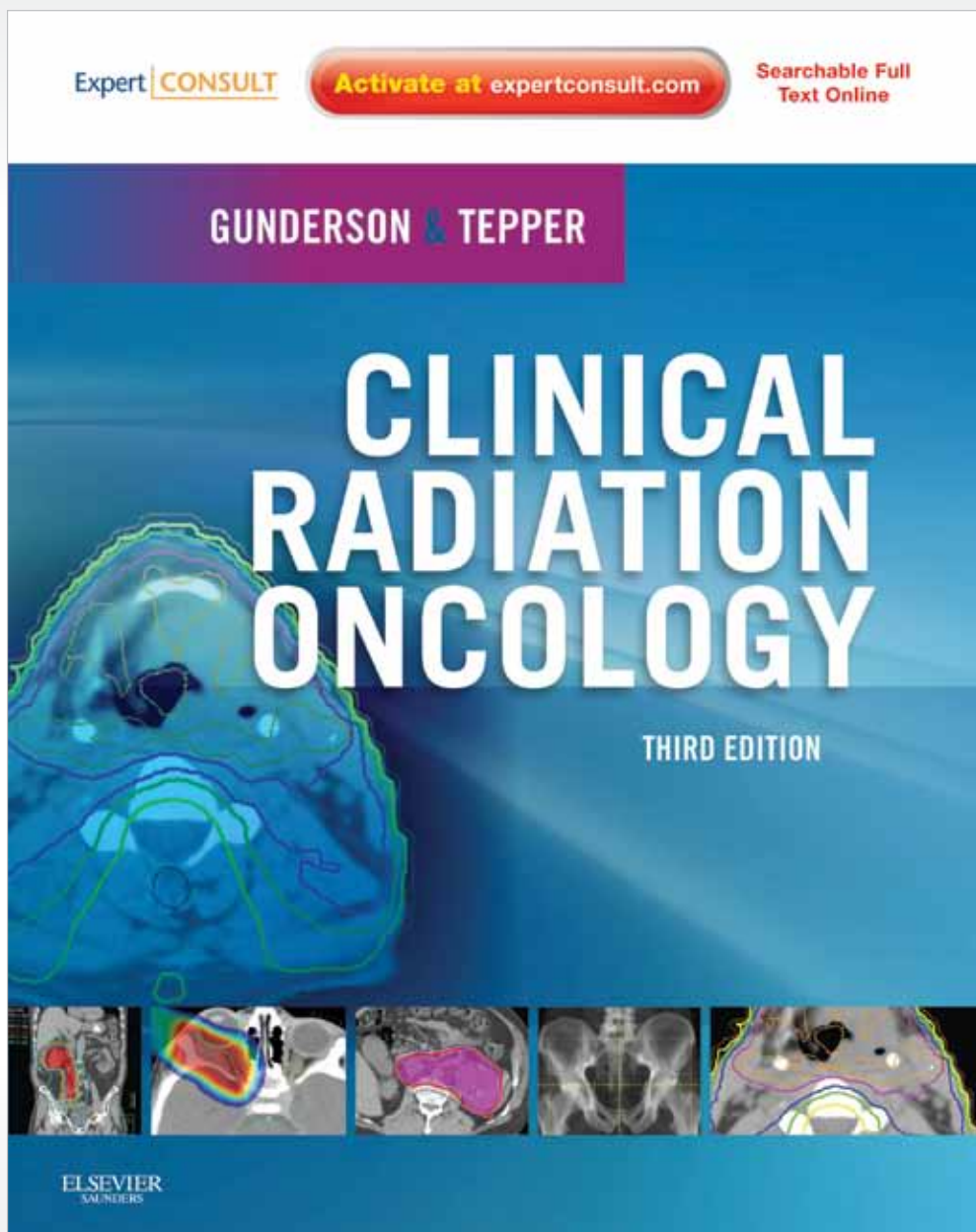
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