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MAC launches official website for hepatitis C campaign



#MYXHEPC coalition with University of Malaya students for an on-campus talk.

DR JOSLYN NGU

The Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC) reaches another milestone in its campaign to eliminate hepatitis C in Malaysia by launching an official website (<https://myxhepc.com>), recently.

The campaign, named #MYX-HEPC, was initiated on 28 July 2017 in conjunction with the World Hepatitis Day. "#MYXHEPC is a call to action for Malaysians to come together and break the silence surrounding hepatitis C," said Bakhtiar Talhah, president of the MAC. The #MYX-HEPC name is short for Malaysians Against Hepatitis C. The campaign is a collaboration among MAC, volunteers and the Artsee Networks, an 'arts-in-activism' initiative.

The website provides information on the #MYXHEPC programme, statistic and details on the liver infection and how an individual can play a vital role in preventing the spread of hepatitis C. This will ultimately lead to a reduction in economic burden,

needless suffering and preventable mortality from liver diseases caused by hepatitis C.

"Young people especially are encouraged to take part in the #MYX-HEPC Clever New Media Festival which is centred around social media and other creative digital content," said Bakhtiar. The Festival comprises on-campus talks, film screenings, workshops and weekly online quizzes. Using digital and social media platforms, it seeks to generate creative content (posters, videos, memes etc) through contests under the #MYXHEPC Clever New Media Festival. The highlight of the Festival are the design and video contests, which will end on 16 March 2018, with prizes up to RM10,000 to be won.

The #MYXHEPC campaign also comes at a critical juncture when the Ministry of Health (MOH) Malaysia recently announced its decision to invoke compulsory licensing clause for the hepatitis C drug sofosbuvir, which can cost up to RM300,000 for a full course of treatment for

each patient. For this bold move, which is a world first, the MOH was duly recognized with the Leadership Award on Intellectual Property and Access to Medicines 2018 at the Global Summit on Intellectual Property and Access to Medicines, held in Marrakech, Morocco in January this year.

"Hepatitis C is a highly preventable disease, and thanks to the leadership of the MOH on compulsory licensing, treatment and cure are now within reach as well. However, eliminating hepatitis C begins with education and empowerment, and this is what we hope to achieve through #MYXHEPC," said Bakhtiar.

In 2009, it was estimated that 453,700 Malaysians were infected with hepatitis C. A total of 59 percent of this group acquired the infection through injection. The incidence is higher among men compared to women, and among Malays compared to Chinese and Indians. [*Euroasian J Hepatogastroenterol* 2016;6(1):52-55]