LAUNCH OF BEAUTY (Bringing Education and Understanding to You) AND HEALTH

*a joint project between the National Cancer Society Malaysia and Asia Cancer Forum (Japan) is supported by Astellas Pharma Inc.*

Kuala Lumpur, 11 August 2022 – The National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM) together with Asia Cancer Forum (Japan) today announced the launch of BEAUTY (Bringing Education and Understanding to You) and Health, a community-based digitally driven intervention for the improvement of cancer-specific health knowledge, literacy and risk-reduction practices based within community barbershop and beauty salons in Malaysia for screenable male and female cancers and other Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Today, cancer is a leading health problem in Malaysia. More than 20,000 new cases are diagnosed every year and is one of the top 5 causes of death in the country today. Cancer control efforts are threatened by several issues, such as slow diagnosis, unequal access to care due to socioeconomic considerations, and high dropout in discontinuation of treatment. The COVID-19 epidemic has only made these problems worse.

Through the BEAUTY and HEALTH project, local barbershops and beauty salons will act as health communication platforms for cancer prevention and screening. These are places people go to regularly, and it often serves as communication platforms for male or female communities.

Salons and barbershops also play a role in social activities on the positive side to assist people to live better lives. At the same time, digital technology has the function of encouraging people to change their behaviour, but it is only effective when it relates to communities in the real world. The goal of this project is to share the world view of creating a better community by fusing the community-based networks of local hair salons and barber shops with digital technologies.

The launch of the collaboration was officiated by Health Minister YB Khairi Jamaluddin in attendance of Dato’ Dr Saunthari Somasundaram, President of NCSM, Dr Norie Kawahara, Representative Director, Angelique Lewis, Senior Director of Access to Health, Sustainability, Astellas US LLC and Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia HE Katsuhiko Takahashi who supported the event virtually.
“With this noble collaboration between NCSM and Asia Cancer Forum (Japan), education on cancer and health, in general, can certainly reach out to more Malaysians both in the rural and urban areas where the topic is rarely shared and discussed,” said Health Minister YB Khairy Jamaluddin.

Speaking on the occasion, Dato’ Dr Saunthari said, “We are thrilled to be a part of this collaboration as a non-profit organisation that empowers Malaysians to prevent, identify, beat, and survive cancer.

“This initiative takes our approach to education on cancer to a different path, a place where our community connects, they share and learn from one another with just a short visit to a place they are most comfortable at, the beauty salon and barbershops," added Dato’ Dr Saunthari.

While Japanese Ambassador to Malaysia, HE Katsuhiko Takahashi who conveyed his message of encouragement virtually during the event said “Early detection of cancer, early treatment, and development of effective treatments are becoming more important for the whole society to work on. In this regard, the program to be launched this time to raise cancer awareness in the community, build a cancer prevention registry, and develop a cancer education database is a very important initiative, and I wish it a great success,”

Commenting on the launch of BEAUTY and Health, Dr Norie Kawahara, Representative Director of the Asia Cancer Forum stated, “This project has the potential to be a true pioneer for human-centric, digitally driven programs relating to raising awareness about cancer and cancer screening in the community. Asia Cancer Forum believes that such approaches have the real potential to contribute to the realization of Universal Health Coverage for cancer in Asia.”

“We are extremely proud to have provided recent support to the National Cancer Society Malaysia in partnership with Asia Cancer Forum Japan, in its comprehensive efforts to improve access to quality cancer care. This support intends to help the National Cancer Society Malaysia and Asia Cancer Forum Japan reach more than one million Malaysian residents with cancer control efforts that include the development of a cancer educational database repository, cancer preventative registry, and community engagement sessions. This work should stimulate important discussion on cancer awareness within local communities.” said Shingo lino Vice President, Sustainability, Astellas Pharma Inc

BEAUTY and Health (men and women) will consist of a comprehensive set of interlinked smaller solutions integrated into one large ecosystem which can subsequently be scaled up and function as a nationwide sustainable umbrella system grounded within the setting of community barber shops (BEAUTY and Health Men) and beauty salons (BEAUTY and HEALTH Women).
The implementation of BEAUTY and Health (men) & BEAUTY and Health (women) will comprise the following components:

1. Development and deployment of a cancer educational database repository
2. Development and deployment of the Malaysian Cancer Preventive Registry
3. Community Engagement Sessions

Community engagement sessions will be conducted in an organised and systematic manner; targeting rural and disadvantaged communities across the nation where the intervention team will act to deliver targeted health awareness, literacy and behavioural change messaging which are based on the foundation of the (1) and (2) components as developed above.

Participants or customers to salons and barbershops will receive information on general cancer risk and reduction practise, colorectal cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, and cervical cancer. It will also include risk reduction practices for obesity and smoking as well as self-assessment tools.

The programme will begin in Kuala Lumpur with the participation of technical experts and respondents from different states joining the sessions and subsequently moving to Selangor, Pahang, Perak and Negeri Sembilan ending with a large-scale nationwide effectiveness study.

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