

Wong: Good oral health enhances quality of life

SIBU: Oral health promotion is recognised as the key to empowering the population towards achieving optimum oral health.

Stating this, Minister of Environment and Public Health Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh said good oral health enhances the quality of one's life.

"Ignoring oral health problems can lead to needless pain and suffering with financial and social implications that significantly lower the quality of life," he said when addressing the Malaysia Oral Health Awareness Campaign Charity Programme at Delta Mall here yesterday.

The campaign included an exhibition on dental topics, free dental screening, dental quiz competition and a public forum.

Wong, who is also Second Finance Minister, said it was wiser to avoid some unhealthy habits that could affect oral health, for example, lack of exercise, poor dietary practices, smoking, excessive consumption of alcohol and sugar.

He said adopting a healthier lifestyle could improve the quality of life and bring a lifetime of smiles.

According to him, the Oral Health Service in Sarawak is rendered through a comprehensive network of eight specialist dental clinics, 26 main dental clinics, 129 primary school dental clinics, 24 secondary school dental clinics and 74 mobile dental teams.

He said after eight years of implementation of a master



HEALTH TALK: Wong (left) talks with the president of Malaysian Dental Association, Dr. How Kim Chuan after launching the campaign.

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Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh, Minister of Environment and Public Health

plan called Pinnacle 2010 which was aimed to improve oral health of all Sarawakians, especially school children, the oral health of school children has improved.

He revealed that last year 25 per cent of six-year-old children and 51 per cent of 12-year-old children in the state were free from dental decay.

Last year, he stated that 46,410 children in 1,456 (76 per cent) kindergartens and 252,558 children in 1,202 (95.2 per cent) primary schools

received oral healthcare are under the Incremental School Dental Programme.

This year, he said, 1,511 kindergartens (79 per cent) were expected to receive oral healthcare under this programme.

"We are glad the school-based programmes that provide preventive care such as screenings, fissure sealants, fluoride varnish and dental health education besides oral curative care, are being conducted in our schools.

"Many children do not

normally visit the dentist on a regular basis because their parents or caregivers do not recognise oral care as a need, or the parents cannot take time off from work or have difficulties with transportation.

"School-based programmes solve all these problems and also provide an added benefit of providing the children with referrals for more comprehensive care at the community health clinics," he said.

On community water fluoridation, he said it was one of the most effective public health measures in the prevention of dental decay.

He said under this initiative, 68 per cent of the people in the state receive fluoridated water supply from 35 water treatment plants equipped with fluoride feeders.

He said in areas without fluoridated water supply, a school-based fluoride mouth rinsing initiative has been implemented.

The minister said last year, 4,526 children in 21 rural primary schools participated in this initiative which has been shown to reduce dental decay by four per cent after three years of implementation.

"Although we are experiencing a shortage of dental officers, we are proud of the strides that we have achieved in improving the oral health of the people.

"Many Malaysians now enjoy better oral health than their parents. Most adults are now expected to retain their natural teeth over their lifetimes."