

NEWS RELEASE

Less Harmful Alternatives Saves Lives

KUALA LUMPUR, 7 June 2024 – Less harmful alternatives save lives, and Malaysia should adopt this strategy to reduce the health risks associated with smoking, said the Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA) in conjunction with World Vape Day, which falls on 30 May 2024.

These comments came on the back of the recently launched No Smoke Less Harm Report 2024, which revealed that Sweden has successfully reduced its smoking rates by 55% to 5.6%. This significant reduction is attributed to the country's proactive implementation of tobacco harm reduction (THR) strategies. In stark contrast, Malaysia's smoking rates remain alarmingly high at 21.3%.

Furthermore, the report reveals a substantial health benefit correlated with Sweden's THR policies: a 24% lower rate of male cardiovascular deaths compared to Malaysia. This striking difference underscores the potential life-saving impact of harm reduction approaches.

Dr Arifin Fii, President of the Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy, said, “Sweden's success story is a powerful testament to the efficacy of tobacco harm reduction strategies. The data from the No Smoke Less Harm Report 2024 clearly indicates that we can achieve significant public health gains by adopting similar strategies in Malaysia.”

“Implementing harm reduction strategies can lead to a win-win situation for public health and smokers seeking less harmful alternatives. It is time for Malaysia to embrace these proven methods to create a smoke-free future for our citizens.”

Dr. Ariffin further emphasized that Malaysia should refrain from implementing prohibitive regulations, and instead should focus on education. “We need to shift our focus from prohibitive measures to harm reduction. By providing smokers with less harmful alternatives, we can significantly lower smoking rates and improve public health outcomes.”

“Furthermore, it is important to focus on comprehensive awareness campaigns to accompany any regulatory measures rather than harsh regulations. Providing accurate information about the relative risks of different nicotine delivery methods is essential in enabling individuals to make informed choices about their health. Moreover, targeted education efforts can help dispel misconceptions surrounding vaping and prevent the uptake of these products by non-smokers.”

“ACATA stands ready to support the government in this transition and calls for collaborative efforts to develop and implement harm reduction policies tailored to the Malaysian context. By doing so, Malaysia can aspire to achieve similar successes in reducing smoking rates and improving overall public health.”

About Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy

Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy or ACATA is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working to reduce addiction-related harms for Malaysians. It is promoting evidence-based public health policies with human rights-based approaches, through research and analysis. Helmed by medical professionals, ACATA strives to increase local studies on addiction and the implementation of

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progressive science-based regulatory frameworks through advocacy, public awareness, education, and research dissemination.

For more information, visit <http://acata.com.my/index.html>