

To quote:
Dr Arifin Fii
President of Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA)

MEDIA STATEMENT

KHAIRY JAMALUDDIN'S COMMENT ON TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION IS OFFENSIVE AND UNCALLED FOR

Advanced Centre for Addiction Treatment Advocacy (ACATA) is disappointed with the comments made by Khairy Jamaluddin which dismisses tobacco harm reduction as a means to reduce smoking incidences in the country.

Any elected leader must have an open mind and not rudely dismiss and discard scientific-based evidences. The potential of vape in reducing smoking incidences has been scientifically proven and well-documented internationally. It should not be dismissed and instead be embedded into Malaysia's policy of reducing smoking prevalence.

His statement is careless and shows a nonchalant attitude about harm reduction, which has been proven to work in managing addiction. In Malaysia, harm reduction has also been deployed and a case in point is the use of methadone to manage opioid addiction.

Such negative comments are not only offensive but also invalidates the work that has been done by thousands on harm reduction experts in Malaysia and all over the world.

In fact, the use of nicotine patch or gum, which Khairy Jamaluddin has publicly supported, is also a form of harm reduction which is now at danger of being treated with the same stance.

The fact that the caretaker Health Minister has rubbished suggestions to exclude vape, a harm reduced product, from the proposed Generation Endgame (GEG) means it will set dangerous precedence for other form of harm reduced products. Going by the same logic, there is danger that nicotine patch and gum can also be included under GEG.

Another worrying point is the inaccurate information shared on EVALI. It is not caused by the regular use of vape as claimed by Ministry of Health, but instead the misuse and abuse of prohibited substance with vape.

In the United States (US), where EVALI cases have been reported back in 2019, the US health authorities has stated that the cause of EVALI is linked to vitamin E acetate and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) that are added into vape liquid. The fear-mongering tactics which has been employed by the Ministry of Health is disappointing and needs to stop. The Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPG) on the management of EVALI should also be corrected as it is an embarrassment to see Malaysia to be the only one in the world linking wrong facts on EVALI.

The world is changing rapidly, and health leaders must not shy away from scientific evidence and be selective with science and facts. The mission of modern science is not only to create new knowledge but also to use knowledge to address social issues. An inclusive approach is required if the country wishes to address smoking prevalence in this country.