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# **Covid-19 vaccine panel chief urges** Malaysians not to panic over Norwegian deaths before links proven

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A resident receives a dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine at the EHPAD (care home and day centre for elderly people) of the Le Jeune hospital in Saint-Renan

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 20 — The chairman of the Vaccine Selection Technical Working Group (TWG) today said Malaysians should not avoid being vaccinated against Covid-19 based solely on reported deaths among elderly recipients in Norway.

Dr Kalaiarasu Pearisamy said there was still no demonstrable link that the deaths were a direct result of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine.

It was previously reported 23 chronically ill people, all aged 75 and above, died after they received their vaccination shots.



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"What we know is that currently there is no causality, or direct indication that the vaccine caused their deaths.



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"It may be that because of their old age, and they also had chronic illnesses, they actually died due to reasons more related to their age," he said during an interview with Astro Awani.

He added that the Ministry of Health and TWG are closely monitoring developments.

When asked how safe the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is for Malaysian use, Dr Kalaiarasu said he would be taking the vaccine himself and asserted that regulatory agencies around the world, including Malaysia's National Regulatory Pharmaceutical Agency (NPRA), have deemed it safe.

He added that the Vaccine Selection TWG — which includes experts in immunology, infectious diseases and statistics — also found the results of Pfizer's trials to be satisfactory.

"Pfizer conducted its trials on over 40,000 people with ages ranging from 16 years to 80 years, and we can accept the effectiveness of the vaccine, because it has a 95 per cent efficacy.

"The study also included people from various races and countries," he

Dr Kalaiarasu, who is also the director of the Institute for Clinical Research Malaysia, additionally pointed out that adverse reactions to the Covid-19 vaccine are occurring at a much lower rate than death caused by the disease.

On January 6, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that allergic reactions to the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine are occurring at a rate of 11.1 per one million vaccinations.

As of yesterday, the Covid-19 death rate in Malaysia is four in every 1,000 infections.

Malaysia is to receive a total of 25 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine by the end of this year, with the first batch of doses set to arrive next month.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has indicated that frontliners and those aged above 60 will be the first to receive the vaccine.

\* A previous version of the report misstated the number of vaccine trials conducted by Pfizer-Biontech worldwide. The report has since been corrected.













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