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Vaccine-hesitant not helping ongoing inoculation exercise

April 6, 2021 @ 5:35pm



Vaccine scepticism and hesitancy should be gotten rid of if we really care for our lives, our country and most importantly, our loved ones. -NSTP/File Pic

LETTER: Vaccine scepticism and hesitancy should be gotten rid of if we really care for our lives, our country and most importantly, our loved ones.

I read with dismay a newspaper report today which stated the possibility of the occurrence of the fourth wave of Covid-19 infections amid the increasing number of virus cases, hitting several states.

If the recent statement by our Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Khairy Jamaluddin is anything to go by, the national immunisation programme seems to be going at a slow pace.

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On March 28, Khairy stated that if registration for the second phase of the inoculation programme continued to be slow, the government would not wait for high-risk groups like the elderly, the disabled and those with comorbidities to sign up.

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Since the word "go," the government via the relevant ministries and agencies, has stopped at nothing, from giving the right and accurate information about the vaccines right up to the registration process, you

name it, but it is rather discouraging to see that there are still many, many more Malaysians out there who are reluctant or hesitant to sign up for vaccination.

We should not take our own sweet time to register although the government has not set a deadline for members of the public to sign up for it, for now!

Just yesterday, Khairy said the voluntary Covid-19 vaccination policy might be reviewed by July if registration for the programme is still low.

What does this mean? It only indicates that most of us are still taking things for granted, like this virus is no big deal! The government has long started the ball rolling and as responsible citizens, we should not dilly-dally but register quickly and get vaccinated.

Mind you, already nine cases of that highly contagious South African Covid-19 variant have been detected based on genome sequencing in this country, according to our Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba.

Of course, for now, he would say that things were under control but do we want to see an occurrence of this variant outbreak, coupled with the virus itself, before we actually sign up?

Won't this only aggravate the already difficult, tough situation we are in now? Researchers as reported by the Wall Street Journal, warned that the variant, detected in at least 40 nations including the US, may spread faster and could reduce the efficacy of vaccines.

The variant appears to make some vaccines less effective and has raised concerns that people who already had the disease could get it again from the new strain.

The "wait and see" attitude prevalent among us and those who already have their minds made up about the vaccine or those who have been bastions for the anti-vaccine movement, are of no help either.

We must assist the government in battling this war against the pandemic to achieve herd community in this country. We should actually feel indebted for what the government has done and is still doing for us in as far as the virus is concerned.

The best, possible way of showing our gratitude is by signing up for the

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vaccine so that we can win this battle in the soonest possible time.

Moving forward after the outbreak which has ruined almost all aspects of our life since early last year, we must not be swayed by misinformation, spread on social media, which narratives are nothing less but to cause uneasiness, create hatred and agitation amongst us.

The present Perikatan Nasional-led government has made the vaccines available. Thus, it becomes our responsibility to accept the vaccines offered for free by the government.

Maybe the ministry/ministries concerned should intensify or hold more campaigns to address fear of side effects of vaccines to instil confidence.

This is because transmitting vaccine-related messaging through the various platforms is likely to convince people who are hesitant. In addition, all issues relating to vaccination must be addressed specifically.

Of course, our authorities have carried out various forms of vaccine messaging or programmes thus far like by engaging influencers, popular artistes, national leaders and so on.

Perhaps, getting more health specialists, doctors and other health frontliners in the upfront to spread the word, could be more effective.

Or maybe they could engage those who have been vaccinated to draw their experiences. Whatever are the measures being carried out and going to be taken, protect yourself in order to protect all.

JAMALUDDIN JAINI

Kuala Kangsar, Perak

The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect those of the New Straits Times

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