Every year on the 31st of May, the world

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celebrates World No Tobacco Day. This initiative was initiated by the World Health Organization in 1988 to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocate for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. Each year a different theme is decided upon. For 2014, the theme is “Raise Taxes on Tobacco” which is a follow-up from 2013 which was, “Ban Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship”.

In the spirit of this celebration, the Nicotine Addiction Research & Collaborating Centre (NARCC) together with the Malaysian Medical Gazette will be hosting an online awareness campaign on tobacco control. Tobacco Control includes both aspects of eradicating tobacco use through prevention or assisting those affected with tobacco use as a result of their addiction towards nicotine. As we have highlighted again and again, smoking of tobacco is the main killer and cause of health conditions but nicotine is what keeps the smokers ‘hooked’ to this behaviour.

There will be a number of articles which will be published over the course of the week leading towards May 31st 2014. These articles will be both in Malay and English and include items such as, current tobacco policies, advise to quit by other healthcare providers such as the dentist and psychologist, current frustrations by healthcare providers and reasons why they are passionate and concern to assist and finally an article on what is happening in New Zealand and a sincere wish by an aspiring doctor for a smoke free Malaysia for the betterment of all of us.

As part of this same campaign, we will be using the hashtag #SmokeFreeMY to continue the discussion. Our friends from other countries will also be involved with this in twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Do your part for the campaign by making this small awareness campaign – viral – on the social media scene.

For those of you in healthcare provision or medical students interested in tobacco control, the National Symposium on Tobacco Control will be held in Kuala Lumpur from 14-15 June 2014 to complement this World No Tobacco (WNTD) event. There will also be other events happening across the country and neighbouring countries to commemorate this day.

At the end, we sincerely hope that Malaysia will take heed of the dangers of tobacco to Malaysians. Ten thousand lives are lost annually as a result of smoking, do we really want this continue? Increasing tobacco taxes assists in new smokers to be ‘put off by smoking’ and current smokers to consider quitting.
Our group at NARCC, MMG and other health groups hope that in the next budget, in light of these arguments and Malaysia’s commitment towards the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) that the government of the day will do what is RIGHT and INCREASE tobacco taxes.

We hope you enjoy the articles and campaign.

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