Developing Smoking Cessation Practitioners through SCOPE

Malaysia has implemented a number of legislative activities over the decade of participation in the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC). NARCC (UM) training program - Smoking Cessation Organizing, Planning and Execution (SCOPE) which is accredited by the Ministry of Health.

Smoking is the number one public health problem worldwide killing an estimated six million lives each year and this number is expected to increase to 8 million by 2030. In response to this epidemic, the World Health Organization has ratified a legal global treaty in 2005, the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCTC comprising of evidence based suggestions is summarized to six strategies using the acronym MPOWER. It aims to reduce smoking and harm among member countries (last count 172).

Malaysia is a member of this treaty since September 2006. As part of her commitment a number of legislative activities have been implemented as part of participation in the FCTC. As a result pictorial health warnings, bans on tobacco advertising and an increasing number of smoke free place gazette with all public institutions being smoke free and the latest being all public parks are smoke free zones. The Ministry of Health (MOH) released a blueprint, the National Strategic Plan for Tobacco Control 2015 – 2020 (NSP) with the ultimate aim of reducing by 2045 which aims for a prevalence of <5%. In the interim, Malaysia aims to fulfill its commitment to the United Nation Sustainable Goal of 15% prevalence by 2025.

University of Malaya’s (UM) involvement with the NSP is through the mQuit program launched by the MOH in May 2016. The mQuit involves 5 main elements which includes the “O” of MPOWER - the Offering of help to quit smoking. These five elements include (1) upgrading existing quit smoking care, (2) ensuring adequate pharmacological and psychological intervention be made available, (3) to update the national clinical practice guidelines for healthcare providers in Malaysia to be able to provide smoking cessation services and finally, (5) to develop a national quitline service. UM is in charge of all the NSP elements except items 3 and 4 through the Nicotine Addiction Research Group of the University Malaya Centre of Addiction Sciences (NARCC) formed in 2009 being at the forefront of smoking cessation technology and activity for the nation.

NARCC through research and work dating back in 2009 has found that Healthcare providers lacked the knowledge and skills to provide smoking cessation. Since then developed a training module, initially for dentists which has evolved to cater to all healthcare providers. This training program is called Cessation Organizing, Planning and Execution (SCOPE) and is one of three training programs accredited by the MOH. It involves 6 thought modules, 3 of which are discipline specific namely medical, dental, pharmacy and nursing. This multidisciplinary team allows a more inclusive training to cater to the many different groups of healthcare providers. This program is supported by a smart partnership between public and private entities signed in 2015 and is further supported by a Grand Challenge grant (GC004-15HTM) by the University of Malaya. This allows the training to not only be evaluated for its effectiveness and relevance but also evaluated for its effectiveness and relevance.