KOTA KINABALU: Many smokers are not using the services of healthcare providers to quit smoking.

The Health Ministry has nearly 300 quit-smoking clinics across the country and 30 of them are in Sabah.

As of last year, medical practitioners identified only 431 smokers in the state who had registered for the treatment and a quarter kicked the habit.

Senior lecturer at the Psychological Medicine Department of Universiti Malaya, Dr Amer Siddiq Amer Nordin, said the problem would be the same in Sarawak and the peninsula.

According to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey statistics, he said 23.1 per cent of Malaysians smoked tobacco.

"Assuming that 23 per cent of Sabah's population smokes and only 114 quit smoking, it is a very low figure," Amer said after attending the Sabah Tobacco Control Symposium 2013 at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) here yesterday.

"Perhaps patients don't know where to find help when they want to quit. They should just go to quit-smoking clinics."

The symposium, co-organised by UMS and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, is aimed at introducing tobacco control activities to healthcare providers in Sabah.

One of the speakers from the state Health Department, Dr Nirmal Kaur, said diseases related to smoking remained the top cause of deaths in all government hospitals in Sabah, accounting for more than 17 per cent of hospitalisation and 46 per cent of in-hospital deaths.