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'The Morning Hype' Campaign Unveils The 'My Stroke Story' Photo Exhibition

Inspiring stroke survivors across Malaysia share what life after stroke means to them in a wall of celebration and hope

KUALA LUMPUR, 13th October 2016 – In conjunction with World Stroke Day happening on 29th October, Pfizer Malaysia together with campaign partners National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) and Malaysian Society of Hypertension (MSH) officially unveiled the 'My Stroke Story' Photo Exhibition to celebrate the lives of stroke survivors while at the same time to create awareness on the linkage between morning blood pressure surge and stroke.

Featuring 31 empowering photo stories submitted by survivors from all walks of life, the photo exhibition depicts the personal journeys of survivors living with stroke and their desire to live life to the fullest. The photo exhibition is part of 'The Morning Hype' Campaign launched by the partners in early 2016 which aims to provide a narrative on the importance of understanding stroke and how one can prevent it.

Among the stories shared include the experiences of Albert, Betty and Leong who were also present during the event. From being able to fly an aeroplane to being unable to walk or talk, Albert recalls his story when he suffered from stroke 10 years ago which led him to thoughts of committing suicide during his difficult phase.

While Betty's journey teaches us to be valiant in strength as she is now certified fit to drive again despite being fully dependent on her family for daily routines following her attack in 2014. Another survivor Leong, an optometrist, inspires with his positive outlook in life and enjoyment in swimming and even golfing today. More empowering photo stories on what life after stroke means to survivors can be found as part of the exhibition at NU Sentral.

Every year, a staggering figure of more than 17 million people worldwide experience a stroke.¹ Out of these, six million die and another five million are left disabled.² Stroke has even been recorded as the second leading cause of death in Malaysia.³

“We embarked on this campaign with a goal to create conversations on morning blood pressure surge incidences – which today still remains highly unknown among Malaysians. In Malaysia, for every two hypertensive patients, there are three patients who are unaware of having hypertension or high blood pressure.⁴ However, what’s more crucial is that many do not know that morning blood pressure surge is in fact a strong independent predictor for clinical stroke events⁵,” said Dr. Vicknesh Welluppillai, Country Medical Director of Pfizer Malaysia.

He added, “In an effort to establish the link between both incidences and in light of World Stroke Day, we thought what a better way than to commemorate the courage and triumph of stroke survivors in Malaysia through the power of visual stories. Submissions for the photo exhibition began in August and we were encouraged to receive many motivating stories of life after stroke across Malaysia. We hope that through this initiative, not only messages of encouragement are shared but more importantly, Malaysians are also aware on the importance on how to reduce the risks of stroke cases.”

A stroke happens when the blood flow to the brain is cut off. The brain, like all parts of the body requires oxygen and when brain cells are starved of oxygen, they become damaged and the symptoms that follow are called a stroke.^{6,7}

Depending on which parts of the brain are affected, symptoms of stroke can be wide-ranging including a drooping face, weakness in the arms or legs, difficulty speaking, changes to vision, loss of balance, confusion and memory loss.⁸

“When stroke happens, many fall into depression as they are left with difficulties carrying out their daily lives. With restricted movements and affected speech abilities, survivors have no choice but to depend on others for assistance. We see the same cycle experienced by our survivors. It usually starts off with denial, frustration, loss of hope and some even to the extent of committing suicide,” said Sylvia Chong, General Manager of National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM).

¹ World Stroke Campaign. Available at: <http://www.worldstrokecampaign.org/images/documents/campaign-brochures/2015/WSC-BrochureEnglish110815.pdf>. Accessed on 18 April, 2016.

² World Heart Federation. Stroke. Available at: <http://www.world-heart-federation.org/cardiovascular-health/stroke/>. Accessed on 18 April, 2016.

³ Hoy DG, et al. *Int J Stroke* 2013;8Suppl A 100:21–27.

⁴ Institute for Public Health. (2015). National Health and Morbidity Survey 2015. (2 ed.). Retrieved 17 May, 2016, from <http://www.iku.gov.my/images/IKU/Document/REPORT/nhmsreport2015vol2.pdf>.

⁵ Kario et al.. (2006). Morning Hypertension: The Strongest Independent Risk Factor for Stroke in Elderly Hypertensive Patients. *Hypertens Res*, 29(8), 581-587.

⁶ Blood Pressure UK. Stroke and High Blood Pressure. Available at: <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/BloodPressureandyou/Yourbody/Stroke>. Accessed on 1 April, 2016.

⁷ Johns Hopkins Medicine. Health Library. Available at: http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/healthlibrary/conditions/nervous_system_disorders/history_of_stroke_85_P00223/ Accessed on: 1 April, 2016.

⁸ American Stroke Association. Learn More Stroke Warning Signs and Symptoms. Available at: http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/WarningSigns/Learn-More-Stroke-Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms_UCM_451207_Article.jsp#.Vxci4dR94dU. Accessed on 18 April, 2016

She further shared, “Stroke strikes without warning and more often than not, we have noticed that these attacks regularly do take place in the morning. This is why we are proud to be a part of this initiative as we continue to raise public awareness on the risk of stroke and stroke prevention. The journey to stroke recovery is long and arduous but we want to remind survivors who are currently struggling with the conditions that we are in this together. We also want to encourage them not to give up as there is definitely life after stroke through proper rehabilitation.”

Also known as high blood pressure, hypertension has been on the rise with 30.3% among adults of 18 years and above suffering from this silent disease in Malaysia.⁴ Despite it being a global health issue, very little is known on hypertension taking place in the morning called morning blood pressure surge.

Morning blood pressure surge usually takes place between 6:00am to noon⁹ when there is a spike in our blood pressure levels during the morning¹⁰. While it is normal to have a rise in pressure after awaking, an exaggerated morning blood pressure surge of more than 135/85 mmHG¹⁰ may trigger serious stroke events¹¹.

Also in attendance was Professor Datin Dr. Chia Yook Chin, President of Malaysian Society of Hypertension (MSH) who further shared, “Stroke is a global issue but its association with blood pressure is more severe in Asia as compared to our Caucasian counterparts¹². When stroke strikes, the impact of the incident on a person’s life is tremendous. Hence, being aware of the symptoms and knowing the risks can protect many from having a stroke attack – particularly when it comes to understanding blood pressure levels as this is closely linked to damaged arteries throughout our body. When blood pressure is left uncontrolled, it presents a high risk factor for cardiovascular events such as stroke.¹³”

She continued, “The first step in managing morning blood pressure surge is through regular home blood pressure monitoring to reduce the risk of stroke events.¹⁴ The best time to measure your blood pressure is within two hours after arising when our blood pressure in the morning is at its peak.¹⁵ Medical experts have also revealed that blood pressure control rates in Asia remains low¹⁶ which sparks an even more critical need to inculcate the habit of regular

⁹ Muller et al.. (1985). Circadian Variation In The Frequency Of Onset Of Acute Myocardial Infarction. The New England Journal of Medicine, 313(21), 1315-1322.

¹⁰ Lee et al.. (2011). Morning Hypertension in Treated Hypertensives: Baseline Characteristics and Clinical Implications. Korean Circulation Journal, 41(12), 733-743. Retrieved 17 May, 2016, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/221761278_Morning_Hypertension_in_Treated_Hypertensives_Baseline_Characteristics_and_Clinical_Implications.

¹¹ Kario, K. (2010). Morning Surge in Blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Risk: Evidence and Perspectives. Hypertension, 56, 765-773. Retrieved 14 May, 2016, from <http://hyper.ahajournals.org/>.

¹² Perkovic, V., Huxley, R., Wu, Y., Prabhakaran, D., MacMahon, S. (2007). The Burden of Blood Pressure-Related Disease. Hypertension, 50, 991-997.

¹³ World Health Organization. (2013). A Global Brief on Hypertension: Silent killer, global public health crisis. Retrieved 19 May, 2016, from http://ish-world.com/downloads/pdf/global_brief_hypertension.pdf.

¹⁴ Gibson K. and Lee. R. (2007) Pharmacy Times. Early to Rise? Your Blood Pressure May Be Too!. Retrieved 2 May 2016, from <http://www.pharmacytimes.com/publications/issue/2007/2007-04/2007-04-6392>.

¹⁵ Kario, K. (2015). Essential Manual of 24-Hour Blood Pressure Management from Morning to Nocturnal Hypertension.

¹⁶ Wang, J.G. (2015). The Pulse of Asia. Pulse, 3, 48-87.

blood pressure monitoring for hypertensive patients to optimise blood pressure control.”

Launched during World Hypertension Day in May, ‘The Morning Hype’ Campaign hosted various public awareness activities leading up to World Stroke Day in October educating hundreds across communities. During the launch, a health booth held at The Curve engaged families to take part in the health education activities and free blood pressure checks for adults. Further outreach to healthcare providers were also carried out to help them educate their patients on morning blood pressure surge – which many were unaware of – and to encourage hypertensive patients to have 24-hour blood pressure control.

The campaign has also collaborated with retail partners to distribute over 800 specially assembled Morning Kits consisting of ‘The Morning Hype’ mirror sticker, informative leaflet, healthy snack and other reminders.

The final phase of ‘The Morning Hype’ Campaign featuring the ‘My Stroke Story’ photo exhibition is on display from October 13th to October 16th at the Concourse Level of NU Sentral. Following the public display, the photo exhibition will continue to motivate other stroke survivors through a roadshow at hospitals before finally being placed at the NASAM PJ Centre.

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About NASAM:

The National Stroke Association of Malaysia (NASAM) is a non-profit organization founded in 1996 by Janet Yeo to support Malaysians recover from stroke. Today, NASAM operates seven centres: in Petaling Jaya, Ampang, Penang, Perak, Malacca, Sabah and Johor. It is NASAM's long term mission to make stroke rehab accessible to as many stroke survivors as

possible especially to the poor and those living in rural areas. NASAM's message to all stroke survivors is: There is Life After Stroke through proper rehabilitation. To learn more about us, please visit us at <http://www.nasam.org/>.

About MSH:

MSH was founded in 1993 to promote public education on Hypertension and encourage research and publication towards a better care in the management of Hypertension. To learn more about us, please visit us at: <http://www.msh.org.my/>

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