Child cancer cure rate rose to 90% last year

KUALA LUMPUR: The cure rate for acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) among children at Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC) has increased to 90 per cent last year, compared to 65 per cent in 2002, following the use of a new treatment protocol.

UMMC senior specialist consultant Prof Dr Hany Ariffin said the treatment protocol, a molecular method, was effective as it accurately identified, prognostic signs which are bad for child leukemia patients, as well as provide immediate intensive therapy.

UMMC's Paediatric Oncology Unit, the second largest after Kuala Lumpur Hospital's, offers child cancer treatment including for blood disorders (hematology) and receives about 120 child cancer cases a year.

"Through this new treatment protocol we still use the same medication, but with a more sophisticated method based on the risk stratification of Standard Risk, Intermediate Risk and High Risk," she told reporters after attending the 10th Child Cancer Social Assembly at Universiti Malaya (UM), here yesterday.

Dr Hany said this new method was also capable of treating leukemia cells, reduce under-treatment and prevent side effects from chemotherapy.

She said UMMC continuously conducted research and studies as well as collaborated with the National University of Singapore to find the best method to increase cure rates.

"Seeing patients recover and return to their normal lives, go to school, work and get married are motivators for UMMC medical specialists to keep on researching," said Dr Hany.

She said that it cost about RM80,000 to treat each child cancer patient, of which part was borne by UMMC.

More than 100 patients are still actively seeking treatment at the UMMC, she added. - Bernama

Child cancer patients perform a dance routine at the 10th Child Cancer Social Assembly at University of Malaya yesterday. - Bernama photo