Better cure rate for cancer

KUALA LUMPUR: The cure rate for acute lymphoblastic leukaemia among children at University Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC) had increased to 90 per cent last year, compared with 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 were bad for child leukaemia patients and enabled immediate intensive therapy to be provided.

UMMC’s Paediatric Oncology Unit, the second largest after Kuala Lumpur Hospital’s, offers child cancer treatment, including for blood disorders (haematology), 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 said after attending the 10th Child Cancer Social Assembly at Universiti Malaya here yesterday.

Dr Hany said this new method was also capable of treating leukaemia cells, reducing under-treatment and preventing 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, going to school, working and getting 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. Bernama