Seminar to raise awareness of alcohol related harm at UMS on April 21

KOTA KINABALU: International Organisation of Good Templars (IOGT), a large international NGO, will be joining forces with the Intervention Group for Alcohol Misuse, Sabah (under the umbrella of MERCY Malaysia), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Ministry of Health to reduce alcohol related harm in Sabah.

They will be holding a book launching and a public seminar at the Medical School of UMS on April 21 to raise awareness on alcohol. The public seminar will be held from 8.30 am to 11 am. Those who attend will be given copies of the books entitled “Alcohol and the Family,” “Alcohol and Gender” and “Alcohol and HIV,” which will be launched on that day.

The Executive Director of IOGT International, Mr. Esbjorn Hornberg, will be speaking at the seminar about the role of civil society in reducing alcohol related harm.

There will also be talks from Dr. Thaksaphon, the Director of Center of Alcohol Studies, Thailand and Dr. Helen Lasimbang, Chairperson of MERCY Malaysia, Sabah Chapter.

The president of MERCY Malaysia, Y.B. Dato’ Dr. Ahmad Faizal Mohd Perdaus will officiate the book launching. After the seminar, a small group of community leaders, youth workers and health professionals will be invited for a two day workshop for training and to share ideas about how alcohol related harm can be reduced.

Alcohol is now ranked number three in the list of the world’s leading health hazards from the World Health Organisation (WHO) and causes 4% of all deaths and 5% of all disability worldwide. A recent survey carried out by UMS on 470 people in the Northern part of Sabah showed that 80% of alcohol drinkers will get drunk and excessive intake of alcohol is hazardous or harmful.

The most common drinking pattern is binge drinking, which is infrequent episodes of heavy drinking, normally at cultural events. Binge drinking increases the risk of a number of medical problems, including heart attacks, strokes and accidents, as well as social problems such as domestic violence and fights.

The WHO recommends that no more than two standard drinks should be drunk at one occasion (one standard drink is approximately one tin of 5% beer, 120ml of Tapa, 80ml of Montoku, and 40ml of whisky).

IOGT international is a group that has been working in alcohol advocacy since 1851 and is now “the largest worldwide community of non-governmental organizations with a mission to independently enlighten people around the world on a lifestyle free from alcohol and other drugs.” – By MICHAEL TEH, michael@news-sabahtimes.com.my