



ACT NOW ON COVID-19

As Malaysia's emergency physicians, critical care specialists, intensivists and public health physicians, we urge the Government of Malaysia to act now to control the COVID-19 outbreak. Our window of opportunity is closing rapidly, and we must quickly implement an all-of-society strategy.

Our strategy must have two objectives: to reduce the total number of cases, and to spread them out over a longer period of time ("flattening the peak"). This will allow us to conserve and allocate limited resources – for example, front-line emergency department staff, intensive care beds, ventilators and health inspectors performing contact tracing – in more sustainable and fairer ways.

If the total number of cases are high and they happen all at once, Malaysia's hospitals will be overwhelmed. We do not want Malaysians to undergo the recent Italian experience, where a sudden surge in new cases caused chaos and agonising life-and-death decisions in an overwhelmed health system.

Therefore, we urge the Government to:

1. **Act decisively in prohibiting mass gatherings.** This should be uniformly applied across all government agencies, private businesses, civil societies, religious authorities and communities. This is not a lockdown, which is too extreme and unnecessary. Essential services should continue, and citizens should have basic freedom of movement.
2. **Act firmly to educate the public about "social distancing"**, which is the best intervention to reduce viral spread. We must provide adequate support for workers (who may lose income), employers (who may lose revenue) and citizens (who may lose services). We must protect the mental and physical health of older adults staying at home; civil society organizations can help fill this gap.
3. **Deliver clear, coordinated and confident risk communications** to Malaysians, to provide a reliable source of information, advice and recommendations.

Together with the Health Ministry, we are reallocating existing resources to cater for a possible surge in cases. We are also mobilising additional resources from colleagues in the private sector, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

If we implement social distancing now, we can reduce the total number of cases and distribute them over a longer period of time. This will protect against suffering and allow us to save more Malaysians by allocating our resources more effectively and fairly.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

1. Prof Dr Rosmawati Mohamad (Master, Academy of Medicine Malaysia)
2. Dato' Dr Jahizah Hassan (President, College of Anaesthesiologists)
3. Prof Dr Marzida Mansor (President, Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists)
4. Prof Dato' Dr Mohd Basri Mat Nor (President, Malaysian Society of Intensive Care)
5. Dr Ridzuan Mohd Isa (President, College of Emergency Physicians)
6. Dato' Indera Dr Sha'ari Ngadiman (President, College of Public Health Medicine)
7. Dato' Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar (President, Malaysian Public Health Physicians Association)
8. Prof Dr Chan Yoo Kuen (Council Member, Academy of Medicine Malaysia)
9. Dr Khor Swee Kheng