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THE STAR M/S | O NATION 6/4/2025 (AHAD) QEH doctor makes history on global endoscopy stage

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KOTA KINABALU: From the halls of Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) in Kota Kinabalu to the world's premier endoscopy stage, Dr James Emmanuel is proving that groundbreaking medicine knows no geographic boundaries.

In a first for Malaysia, he has been selected to represent the country at the prestigious World Cup of Endoscopy, to be held during the Digestive Disease Week (DDW) in San Diego, California, next month.

The selection of Dr Emmanuel, 41, from Kuala Lumpur, marks not only Malaysia's debut in the competition but also a proud moment for everyone.

"It is a tremendous honour and privilege, not just for me, but also for my hospital, Sabah and Malaysia," said the consultant gastroenterologist and hepatologist, who has served at QEH for the past 11 years.

The World Cup of Endoscopy, which features only eight top submissions from around the globe, showcases the finest in diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopy.

Selected entries are judged by an international panel of experts, with gold, silver and bronze medals awarded to the top three.

Dr Emmanuel's entry was a video featuring a life-saving and unconventional endoscopic procedure performed in August last year at QEH.

"The procedure we performed had never been attempted before, and our approach was entirely unconventional."

"We carried it out as a life-saving measure, but also chose to submit it as an educational video to introduce this approach as a potential option for patients with similar conditions," he said.

The idea behind the treatment was conceived through a collaborative discussion with a hepatobiliary surgeon and an interventional radiologist, a testament, he said, to the strength of interdisciplinary teamwork in Sabah's healthcare system.

"Together we conceived the idea," Dr Emmanuel told *The Star*, adding that it highlighted the importance of collaborative teamwork in overcoming treatment challenges.

The significance of this achievement extends beyond medical circles.

At the competition, Dr Emmanuel will wear the traditional Kadazan attire, the Gaung, as he takes the stage, reflecting Sabah's cultural heritage alongside Malaysia's medical excellence.

"This is the final stage. Whether I win or not, being shortlisted among the world's best is already a major achievement."

"To compete against renowned institutions like Johns Hopkins and AIG India is no small feat," he said.

His participation at DDW, an event attended by over 20,000



Groundbreaking medicine: Dr Emmanuel at work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Kota Kinabalu.

global delegates, not only places Malaysia on the international map for medical innovation but also elevates the visibility of Malaysia's contributions to healthcare.

"To be the first Malaysian in such a prestigious competition is a milestone I hold with great pride."

"I am deeply grateful to my late mother, who passed away a few weeks ago."

"She was my greatest source of support throughout my life and career, and this achievement is as much hers as it is mine. She was my everything," said Dr Emmanuel.

He described the competition as an incredible platform to showcase new ideas and hopes it will inspire young gastroenterologists in Malaysia to innovate and push boundaries.

"By encouraging innovation and sharing knowledge, we can help strengthen our healthcare system and create a culture where we are always striving to improve."

"Ideally, the outcome of our case could lead to better diagnostic tools and treatment options, ultimately making a real difference in patient care and helping to put Malaysia on the map as a leader in therapeutic endoscopy," he said.

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Fine-tune medical devices

Failure to maintain such gadgets could lead to inaccurate readings

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PETALING JAYA: Medical devices such as blood pressure monitors are designed for clinical use and typically require regular calibration as recommended by the manufacturers, says the Malaysian Pharmacists Society (MPS).

This was in reference to complaints of inaccurate readings by some devices including unauthorised ones being sold online.

"There have been documented cases where inaccurate readings led to inappropriate health decisions, especially in the management of chronic conditions like heart disease or diabetes, where readings directly impact treatment," said MPS president Prof Amrhi Buang.

In some instances, he said, wearable devices have even been reported to interfere with implanted devices such as pacemakers.

"While these incidents are not widespread, they highlight the importance of accuracy, certification and user education when using health monitoring gadgets," he said when contacted.

As for devices that are sold online, he said these gadgets are relatively safe provided that they are certified by the Malaysian health authorities.

"It can be safe if consumers are careful. All medical devices in Malaysia must be registered with the Medical Device Authority (MDA), so consumers should look for certification.

"Always buy from reputable sources such as community pharmacies, authorised distributors, or official brand websites."

He said consumers should be wary of counterfeit products or



exaggerated claims about the device's capabilities.

"If a deal seems too good to be true, it probably is," he cautioned.

Prof Amrhi suggested that consumers be aware of the specific use of a particular device before purchasing it.

"For general fitness tracking, consumer wearables are sufficient.

"But if the device is intended for managing a medical condition such as high blood pressure, opt for certified medical-grade devices.

"Check for the MDA approval and consult your pharmacist or healthcare provider for guidance on the right device, proper usage and interpreting the results," he said.

This includes the device's limitations and manufacturer's service and maintenance recommendations.

Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (Fomca) director Saral James Maniam said while the MDA oversees the regulation of medical devices under the Medical Device Act and provides guidelines on device management, there is a notable absence of publicly accessible protocols on the recalibration of home use medical devices.

"This lack of standardised recalibration guidelines can lead to inconsistencies in device performance and potential risks to patient safety," she said.

Tips to ensure accuracy in home medical devices

Common home medical devices and recalibration

- **Common devices**
Blood pressure monitors, thermometers, glucometers.
- **Recalibration**
Follow brand instructions, generally every 1–2 years.
- > Consumers should check accuracy if readings differ between devices.
- > Pharmacists provide guidance on usage, result interpretation, and health management.

Risks of buying cheap, unregistered devices online

- > Many unregistered medical devices are sold online.
- > Inaccurate health info could deter the right health management.
- > Consumers may face unnecessary health risks (e.g. high blood pressure, diabetes, fever).

Avoiding counterfeit medical devices

- > High demand leads to fake/cheap alternatives, raising concerns over accuracy and reliability.
- > Incorrect readings can harm health, outweighing any cost savings.
- > Buy only Medical Device Authority-registered devices from trusted sellers like pharmacies.

Source: Malaysian Community Pharmacy Guild

TheStar graphics

She said the risk is higher when the person buys a medical monitoring device online where counterfeit or substandard products were also available.

"Regulatory approval is crucial and consumers should ensure that the device is registered with the MDA and can be verified through the Malaysia Medical Device Register portal.

"It is important to buy only from trusted sellers, preferably reputable online platforms that

provide authentic products," she added.

Although the MDA maintains records of medical device incidents, she said that detailed statistics on issues arising from inaccurate readings are not readily available to the public.

Saral suggested that authorities here adopt best practices measures used in the United Kingdom and Australia with regard to the use of health monitoring devices to better protect consumers.



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Buy from reputable companies for peace of mind

PETALING JAYA: She made an online purchase of a blood pressure (BP) monitoring device but it ended up causing her more stress due to its false readings.

It all began when the hawker, identified only as Aunty Annie from Klang, went for a medical check-up late last year and found she had elevated BP.

The doctor advised Aunty Annie, 55, to self-monitor regularly.

"I went home, feeling worried. So when I saw a good offer online about a BP monitoring device, I decided to buy it. I was eager to use it to help me manage my condition.

"And I changed my diet as well to stay healthier," she said in an interview.

But in the following months, the device kept showing alarmingly high readings of between 150 over 95 and 160 over 98, she said.

Aunty Annie said she became more anxious about her BP.

A random visit to a pharmacy for a free BP check led to her discovering that the device had been giving her inaccurate readings.



Get checked professionally: A customer getting tested at a local pharmacy. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

"The reading which was done by the pharmacist using a proper device showed that my BP was within the normal range of 123 over 81," she said.

She said the pharmacist then explained to her about the risks of using uncertified devices that needed to be recalibrated often.

Malaysian Community

Pharmacy Guild honorary secretary Rachel Gan advised people to be cautious when purchasing devices especially online.

"The demand for certain medical devices often leads to the emergence of cheaper, counterfeit alternatives. But the small savings from buying unverified products may not be worth the

risk," Gan said.

"Some sellers on e-commerce platforms may even display fake certification to attract buyers," she added.

She said that buyers might end up getting unreliable readings from unregistered or counterfeit devices.

Gan said that people should consult a pharmacist before purchasing a particular device.

"Pharmacists provide proper guidance on how to use the device, interpret results, and offer after-sales services such as warranty, calibration and health management advice," she said.

Gan noted that such support is usually not available from e-commerce sellers.

On recalibration of these devices, Gan recommended that consumers follow the manufacturer's instructions which varies according to their brand.

"Generally, calibration is advised at least every two years, or preferably annually.

"Consumers should also check their device's accuracy if they notice inconsistencies when comparing with another device," she said.