



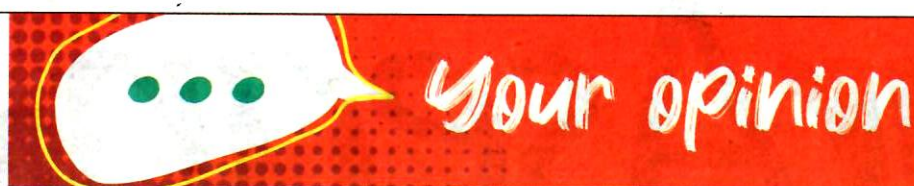
If you want to have your say immediately, use your cellphone. SMS your comments to The Star on topics and issues related to general news, business and sports (include name/ pseudonym): Type STAR NW (or BZ or SP) followed by the message and send to 39993. This is a free service. However, normal mobile operators' network charges apply.

> Congrats to Nicol

Famemas Sports Supporters Club Malaysia heartily congratulates Datuk Nicol Ann David on being crowned World Games Greatest Athlete of All Time. This is a well-deserved accolade for a truly motivating and inspiring sportswoman. We hope her lifelong achievements will inspire many young people to become Nicol Davids of the future. — Famemas Club Exco and members

> Diabetics and Covid-19

The Health director-general has rightly pointed out that diabetics are at greater risk of severe forms of Covid-19. He praised the sixth edition of CPG (Clinical Practice Guidelines) in managing Type 2 diabetes, but I noticed that there was no mention of prevention. Type 2 diabetes is mainly caused by an unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyle. In the span of 10 years, our diabetes prevalence rate among adults has risen from 10% to 20%! Perhaps if we had focused on prevention, Covid-19 may not have caused so many deaths. — KFCHOW



EMAIL editor@thestar.com.my or
MAIL The Editor, Menara Star, 15, Jalan 16/11,
Section 16, 46350 Petaling Jaya.
Letters must carry the sender's full name,
address and telephone number.
A pseudonym may be included.

Lung screening for non-smokers

IN Malaysia, lung cancer is one of the most prevalent cancers and a leading cause of cancer-related mortality among men.

As with all cancers, the survival or prognosis for lung cancer depends very much on the stage of the disease. Poor outcomes here are largely due to late-stage presentation and hence delayed diagnosis in almost 95% of cases.

Traditionally a male smokers' disease, an emerging global trend in recent years is the alarming rise in cases among non-smokers, particularly women of East Asian ethnicity.

Findings of a landmark study from Taiwan (TALENT study) presented at the virtual congress of the World Conference on Lung Cancer (WCLC) in Singapore last month demonstrated the feasibility and value of screening high-risk non-smokers for early detection of lung cancer.

Before this, screening with a low dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan had been advocated only for heavy chronic smokers and former smokers largely based on two major international trials, the National Lung Screening Trial in the United States and the Dutch-Belgian Lung

Cancer Screening trial (NELSON).

This latest Taiwanese study highlights the importance of genetics and correlated risk with a family history of the disease among first, second and third degree relatives. A significant family history was a highly relevant risk factor.

Smoking prevalence among Malaysian women remains low (2%) compared with men (about 45%), hence most female lung cancer victims here are non-smokers. Local data suggests that Malaysian Chinese females are almost twice as likely as Malay or Indian women to develop lung cancer even adjusting for age.

In comparison with the West, lung cancer victims here are slightly younger on average with a higher proportion of non-smokers. The cause of the disease in non-smoking Asian females, especially those of Oriental ethnicity, seems to have a strong genetic basis.

In today's era of precision medicine, doctors and scientists can identify specific genomic molecular mutations within the cancer that may be amenable to bespoke targeted therapies. Such genetic anomalies, for example epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) mutation, are

over-represented in lung cancers found in non-smoking East Asian women.

Given our relatively higher incidence of lung cancer in non- or never smokers compared with the West, it may be unwise to focus future screenings solely on those with a smoking history. LDCT screening may be a reasonable investigation for the high-risk non-smoker, for example a Chinese lady with a strong family history.

Other risk factors include a high cooking index (indoor wok cooking), exposure to passive smoking and previous tuberculosis. Paradoxically, as more cases of lung cancer are diagnosed in non-smokers, the nihilism and stigma associated with this curable disease will gradually wane.

Tomorrow is World Cancer Day.

DR HILMI LOCKMAN
(Pulmonologist)

DR RAJA RIZAL AZMAN
(Radiologist)

DR ANAND SACHITHANANDAN
(Cardiothoracic surgeon)

and DR THO LYE MUN
(Clinical oncologist)

**Members of Lung Cancer
Network Malaysia**

Allow travel but with strict SOP

I REFER to the report, "SOP must be strictly upheld" (*The Star*, Feb. 1). I fully agree that standard operating procedures to control the spread of Covid-19 must be strictly upheld. However, I believe some form of easing on inter-district travel should be allowed to enable businesses, particularly those in the domestic travel and tourism industry, to operate and also to prevent mental breakdown among the people.

With strict SOPs in place, the raykat should at least be allowed to visit seaside spots like Port Dickson and Kuantan for a short trip during the coming CNY holiday. This will greatly reduce the present sense of gloom and doom and also relieve people's boredom.

Businesses in seaside towns that depend on local tourists will be given a chance to earn money to help keep them afloat until the Covid-19 vaccines are easily available. Everyone is afraid now with the rising number of new cases daily and would surely take the necessary precautions.

The rakyat can also be the eyes and ears of the authorities to report people violating SOPs.

DR PETER J. PEREIRA
Subang Indah, Selangor