

A dearth of organ donors

WHO: Rate of donation in Malaysia among lowest in the world

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GEORGE TOWN: The rate of organ donation in the country, at 0.6 per million population, is among the lowest in the world, according to a 2010 World Health Organisation (WHO) report.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin said the rate showed that only 17 people in Malaysia's population of 28 million had actually donated their organs or tissues in 2009.

She said the rate was a far cry in comparison with developed nations

like Spain, Britain and Australia.

"Only 322 Malaysians have donated either their organs or tissues since 1975 after their deaths.

"There is a sharp contrast between us and other developed nations. Spain leads the list with 34.3 per million population being organ donors.

"We need to create awareness among Malaysians on the importance of donating organs," she said during a press conference at a hotel in Batu Feringghi yesterday.

Rosnah had earlier flagged off a beach run held in conjunction with the 14th Scientific Meeting of

Malaysian Society of Transplantation.

She said only 0.57%, or 165,438 Malaysians, had pledged to donate their organs and tissues.

"At the moment, there are 12,133 patients waiting for organ donations, with kidney patients topping the list at 12,100."

Rosnah also said the number of Malaysians undergoing haemodialysis as a result of renal failure had increased threefold, from 7,837 in 2001 to 22,932 in 2010.

She cited religious and cultural subjects as the reasons why many still have the wrong perception on

the issue.

"There is no issue in religion. We want to make it clear that nothing in the religion forbids organ donation. It is an act of benevolence," she said.

The 6km run, themed "Race Against Time: Run For Life", was meant to promote awareness on the importance of organ donation and to encourage healthy lifestyle in preventing end stage organ failures.

More than 700 participants took part in the run jointly organised by the ministry and the society at the beach near Shangri-La's Rasa Sayang Resort and Spa.