

## Dengue vaccine trials under way in five states

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Health Ministry will be conducting a trial study on the use of dengue vaccine in five states from this month until the middle of next year.

Health director-general Tan Sri Dr Mohd Ismail Merican said the states involved were Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Perak, Negri Sembilan and Sarawak.

“Currently, there is no specific treatment or a vaccine available for dengue fever and vector control remains the bedrock for controlling this disease,” he said in a statement yesterday.

He said the vaccine would be tested on its safety, its ability to provoke an immune response in patients and, ultimately, its efficacy in combating the disease, which has so far killed 128 people this year.

He said clinical trials for various aspects such as acute febrile episodes and dengue infection had already started since the middle of this year, involving 300 volunteers.

“If these studies are successful, we hope the vaccine can be made available to the Malaysian people in the next few years,” he said.

Dr Mohd Ismail said the ministry, in collaboration with vaccine world leader Sanofi Pasteur, was also conducting an unprecedented research and development programme, in which Malaysia was leading the region in the making of a novel vaccine for the prevention of dengue in children and adults.

He said the ministry was also studying the feasibility of releasing genetically-modified male mosquitoes to contain the spread of Aedes.

He said it had worked out with both the public and private hospitals for them to report dengue cases with the aim of monitoring the spread of the disease.

“The ministry has also worked tirelessly with various authorities from the public and private sectors in ensuring that nationwide fogging is done in areas reported to have high Aedes breeding activity,” he said. – Bernama

Source: The Star