

Axios International reveals key insights to enabling sustainable healthcare access in Malaysia

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World Health Day 2021: Building a Fairer, Healthier World during the pandemic and beyond



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Celebrated for its world-class healthcare services by the [2019 International Living Annual Global Retirement Index](#), Malaysia has invested significantly into its healthcare sector; the country allocates [RM30.6 billion yearly](#) to the provision of quality healthcare to its population. Over the past year however, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed an exponential strain on the healthcare infrastructure, whilst it concurrently grapples with the growing incidence of chronic conditions within her ageing population. Alongside continued medical inflation and the rising costs of long-term, expensive specialised treatments, the growth of the healthcare burden in Malaysia is not to be overlooked, especially as we progress towards a *fairer, healthier world*.

In conjunction with this year's **World Health Day (7 April)**, pioneering healthcare access company [Axios International](#) hosted a panel discussion on **Making healthcare access sustainable: Enhancing the patient experience during and beyond the pandemic**. Moderated by [Dishen Kumar](#), anchor of Astro AWANI's Health Matters, the panel consisted of [Ms. Roshel Jayasundera](#), Director, Global Consulting, Axios International and Dato' [Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim Wahid](#), Consultant Clinical Oncologist, Beacon Hospital, Malaysia; delivering insights on the role of public-private partnerships and digital health solutions in enabling sustainable healthcare access in Malaysia.

Speaking at the panel about the reasons why patients prematurely conclude their long-term treatments for conditions such as cancer, **Dato' Dr. Ibrahim** shared, "There are financial and non-financial reasons that may deter patients from adhering to long term medical care. Sustaining the high cost of treatment may be the main cause for non-compliance. Medication costs for NCDs, especially cancer, have rapidly risen over the years, severely impacting a patient's ability to fund their own treatment. It is imperative that this financial burden is shared by other healthcare stakeholders including pharmaceutical companies and hospitals so that a wider section of the society is able to access healthcare and is empowered with a good quality of life."

In Malaysia, which adopts a dichotomous yet synergistic public-private approach to healthcare, almost 50% of the Malaysian population rely solely on healthcare coverage provided by the government, without any supplementary financial support for their healthcare needs. Amongst the reasons cited for the lack of additional healthcare coverage, 43% cited inaffordability as a main factor. When non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 74% of the nation's deaths and cost the nation [RM8.9 billion](#) in productivity losses, being able to intervene and enable patients to access and adhere to treatment is a crucial step for healthcare stakeholders to take in preventing suboptimal medical outcomes that generate knock-on effects on economic productivity.

"For healthcare systems to be resilient, there's a need for healthcare stakeholders to come together and collaborate across public and private domains. This synergy can unravel new efficiencies and help serve patients in the most comprehensive manner. For chronic diseases in particular, this is all the more crucial as access solutions not merely focus on access to treatment but also strong adherence measures so patients can complete their treatment cycles for optimum medical outcomes," emphasized **Ms Jayasundera**. "If there's one thing that COVID-19 has taught us, it is the pitfall of working in silos – a unified healthcare industry will have the ability to forge new innovative solutions, no matter what healthcare challenge confronts us in the future."

The panel also discussed the role of digital solutions in enabling healthcare access for patients, a rising trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exposed the structural gaps in reaching patients outside of hospital settings.

"Healthcare systems across the world are still struggling to regain their footing one year into the pandemic. This is bleak for patients on chronic medication, who require regular treatment and follow-ups to prevent further health complications. When these patients refrain from visiting health facilities for various reasons such as risk of COVID-19 infection, digital tools play a significant role in ensuring continued access to medical treatments," noted **Ms. Jayasundera**. "As a strong enabler in the healthcare access ecosystem, digital tools connect patients with healthcare stakeholders, ensuring that the continuum of care is maintained, even outside the hospital settings."

To date, Axios International has supported over 1000 patients across 15 patient support programs in Malaysia. The company plans to broaden access opportunities in continued outreach efforts to patients outside of hospitals in the next five years.