<table border="0" cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" width="470" align="center" id="content-box-in"><tr><td id="title" style="font-size: 14px; font-weight: bolder; color: red; text-decoration: blink">Blood tests a big scam?</td> </tr> <tr> <td id="author"> Wong Pheak Zern | Jun 29, 09 2:18pm </td> </tr> <tr> <td id="content"> A medical practitioner has provided answers to speculation and concerns whether Malaysians are being taken for a ride by healthcare providers who offer affordable Live Blood Analysis (LBA).

The Klang Valley doctor brought the matter to light following a warning in the American website Quackwatch that that the LBA is a scam used by healthcare service providers to sell nutritional supplements.

The doctor who only wanted to identified as Dr Lim defended the use of LBA, and said the test is getting a bad rap because it is being abused by quacks.
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 "LBA is a useful test if it is done by professional doctors. Unfortunately in Malaysia there are those without much medical knowledge and expertise, like sinsehs, pharmacists and health spa workers performing LBA," Lim told Malaysiakini.

According to Lim, LBA is just one of a two-stage test named Bradford Peripheral Blood Assessment (BPBA); the second stage is called Free Radical or Oxidative Test.

 Lim said the BPBA is the "ideal biological probe for assessing health and disease in less than 40 minutes" and provides additional information for patients and doctors at a "sub-clinical level".

"For example, most of us undergo a medical checkup once a year. We can add on the BPBA to it as it detects diseases that cannot be seen in normal blood tests," he said.

A normal blood test and the LBA

  Lim explained that a normal blood test is done using microscopes with 1500x magnification to examine dead white blood cells, red blood cells and platelets.

"In contrast, LBA is a screening test for hematological status using phase contrast and dark field microscopy with a magnification of 8000x to 15000x.

 "Through LBA the activities of blood cells such as killing bacteria and fungus can be observed clearly," said Lim, who has been conducting LBA in his center for 10 years.

He added: "To perform LBA, a single drop of blood is collected from a finger-tip for examination when the blood cells and microorganisms are still alive.

 "Through LBA doctors are able to assess a patient's immune, nutritional, circulation and toxicity (liver stress) status after the blood cells have been observed under a microscope.

"It thus gives us early signs of deterioration of our health conditions and provides vital information to formulate a nutritional or metabolic programme."

Lim said that in the second stage of the BPBA, the Free Radical Test, a single drop of blood is collected from the finger-tip by autolancet.

 The blood is allowed to clot and then examined under 200x to 400x magnification. The amount and general location of oxidative processes within the body can be assessed within minutes.

 "The Free Radical Test is able to identify problems such as vitamin C deficiency, calcium imbalance and microflora imbalance," said Lim.

A gimmick to make fast buck

 "Seeing one's own blood cells on a video screen is, a powerful experience. It gives patients the impression of hi-tech, cutting edge science combined with holistic care," said Edzard Ernst, a prize-winning American physician to describe LBA.

"And impressed, patients are ready to part with a lot of money," said Ernst in an article which appeared in the British newspaper The Guardian.

/> "Then patients are potentially cheated three times over. First, you are diagnosed with a &#65533;condition' you don't have; then a lengthy and expensive treatment ensues; and finally the bogus test is repeated and you are declared &#65533;improved' or &#65533;back to normal'," said Ernst.

Lim, however, defended genuine doctors who had the necessary medical skills and expertise to perform LBA.

Lim said those not qualified normally will just perform one stage of BPBA, which is the LBA as this requires less medical skills and expertise.

 Without the second stage called Free Radical Test, the test results are incomplete and insufficient to provide further treatment and suggestions of nutritious diets to patients.

"Moreover they do not have the ability to interpret the results correctly, because their purpose is just to make a profit by selling patients their nutritional products based on inaccurate LBA results," said.

Training and a good microscope needed

Lim pointed out that microscopes are not a controlled item in Malaysia and it is easy for scammers to purchase low quality microscopes with a low price tag and perform LBA.

"A microscope with a magnification of 3000x to 4000x costs about RM4,000. The results of tests performed with these microscopes will not be accurate," he said.

Lim said these quacks do not undergo training to perform LBA, therefore with the low priced microscopes as their equipments, the capital to start their &#65533;scam' is very low.

"Thus they are able to charge RM50 for the LBA, some even offer it for free. In contrast, my customers pay between RM350 to RM500 a thorough analyses in my centre," he said.

Lim said a big number of Malaysians are attracted by the low-priced LBA and are being duped by those who using it as a gimmick to sell their supplementary products.

 He advised the public not to undertake LBA offered by those without medical licence and qualification, even though the price offered to them is much cheaper, because "the analyses and interpretation of the magnifications within 40 minutes requires the eye of an experienced practitioner".

The Health Ministry and the Malaysian Medical Association declined to comment on this issue.&#65533; </p>