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In case of emergency...

Treatment for extreme allergic emergency cases is now available in Malaysia.

THE introduction of a new self-administered auto-injector containing epinephrine for acute allergic emergency or anaphylaxis is opportune as the global reported incidence is rising. This launch by Merck Sdn Bhd is significant as Malaysia is one of the first markets in the South East Asian region to offer this auto-injector.

Fatalities due to anaphylaxis are underreported and its prevalence is underestimated worldwide. Nevertheless, in the US, statistics indicate that the annual incidence of anaphylactic reaction is 30 per 100,000 persons and those with asthma, eczema or allergic rhinitis have a greater risk.

Anaphylaxis is an allergic emergency. It is a rapid, severe allergy reaction that occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen or an allergy-causing substance. When the allergen enters the bloodstream, the body releases chemicals to protect itself from the allergen. These chemicals can cause dangerous symptoms including breathing difficulty, swelling, dizziness, shock and even death.

The most commonly documented causes of anaphylaxis involve latex, medications, food, insect stings and even exercise.

"Underreporting of anaphylaxis incidence does not reflect the magnitude of the problem," said Assoc Prof Ranbir Kaulsay, President of the Malaysian Society of Allergy and Immunology (MSAI). "We need to capture the prevalence as deaths occur every day because the symptoms of anaphylaxis go unrecognised or because treatment is not prompt enough," he added.



Assoc Prof Ranbir Kaulsay... 'Anaphylaxis poses a small, but significant risk to the public...'

Anaphylaxis can result in a fatal outcome either because of obstructed airway or severe drop in blood pressure. Once anaphylaxis begins, the treatment of choice is an immediate injection of epinephrine, followed by emergency medical attention. Because there is no way to predict the severity of a reaction, and anaphylaxis progresses so rapidly, waiting for the paramedics or ER staff to administer epinephrine may greatly increase the chance of death. The auto-injector rapidly constricts blood vessels, relaxes the lung muscles to improve



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Dr Kuljit Singh... 'It is essential that immediate treatment is given to patient experiencing an anaphylactic shock..'

breathing, reverses swelling, and stimulates the heartbeat, making it the treatment of choice for anaphylaxis. This auto injector is designed for self-administration of epinephrine, providing a rapid, convenient dose for individuals needing protection from

potentially fatal allergic reactions.

"Anaphylaxis normally occurs away from medical help, but it requires a quick acting drug for early administration. It is essential that immediate treatment is given to patient experiencing an anaphylactic shock," explained Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) specialist Dr Kuljit Singh.

The auto-injector has been designed and prepared as an easy-to-carry device that patients could keep with them at all times. It is essential that anyone with a history of anaphylaxis keep the auto injector at hand at all times and be prepared to use them whenever a reaction occurs.

"Anaphylaxis poses a small, but significant risk to the public and with the launch of this auto injector, we will be able to treat these cases, saving lives in a timely manner," said Assoc Prof Ranbir.

However, take note that the auto-injector provides the patient with emergency therapy, but immediate follow-up care by medical professionals is necessary to counter an anaphylactic episode.

Note: The auto-injector (0.3/0.15mg epinephrine) is indicated for emergency treatment of allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) for people with a history of an anaphylactic reaction. It should be used with extreme caution in people who have heart disease. Side-effects of epinephrine may include fast or irregular heartbeat, nausea, and breathing difficulty. Certain side effects may be increased if it is used while taking tricyclic antidepressants or MAOIs. Consult your doctor for more information.

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