

## Fostering Health Wisdom: Unveiling Insights from Sibu's Health Event

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### Abstract

The health awareness event with the theme "Cultivation of Health Literacy," was held on May 21, 2022, at the University of Technology Sarawak (UTS). The collaboration between UTS, Sibu hospital and Sarawak Midwives Association reached out "beyond usual hospital setting" and represented an innovative approach and emphasised the power of unity in promoting the community health. The event successfully gathered 921 participants and featured a range of initiatives, including green publicity strategies, collaborations with local businesses, and diverse healthcare literacy booths. The paper highlights the event's structure, strategies, outcomes, and the crucial role it played in advancing community health literacy. The participant feedbacks underscored the positive influence of the event and the demand for similar initiatives in the future, positioning it as a promising model for fostering health awareness and community engagement.

### Introduction

Health literacy is a fundamental aspect of promoting public health and well-being. The "Cultivation of Health Literacy" event held on May 21, 2022, in Sibu, Sarawak, served as a remarkable initiative in this regard. This event brought together various stakeholders, including the University of Technology Sarawak (UTS), Sibu Hospital, and the Sarawak Midwives Association, and demonstrated a commitment to fostering health literacy within the community. This paper delves into the comprehensive aspects of the event, including its objectives, strategies, outcomes, and the collaborative efforts of key stakeholders.

### Health Literacy Booths

Various healthcare literacy booths covered topics such as palliative care, wound care, HIV/infection diseases, diabetic care, basic life support, and smoking cessation. These aimed to empower participants with knowledge and skills for informed health decisions. Basic health screenings were provided to 284 visitors, revealing the importance of early detection. Dental screenings and smoking cessation programs were also offered, with participants referred to the hospital for further management. Mental health received due attention, with 468 adult visitors engaging with the mental health booth indicating the rise in public concern regarding mental health.

At the heart of the event was the Quality Use of Medicine-Consumer (QUMC) program, a national initiative led by the Ministry of Health Malaysia. The program's objective was to enhance consumers' understanding of medicine and promote rational medication usage. Ten informative booths were set up, offering insights into various aspects of medicine use. Role-play activities allowed participants to experience the pharmacist's role in medication-related tasks. Interactive games catered to participants of all age groups, fostering an enjoyable and educational atmosphere. A "Wheel of Fortune" booth distributed 500 gifts, reinforcing engagement with the public. The effectiveness of the QUMC program was assessed through pre-assessments and post-assessments. The pre-assessment revealed that only 24% of participants passed the test, highlighting the need for health education. However, after engaging with the ten pharmacist booths, the post-assessment showed significant improvement, with 60% of participants passing. This substantial increase underscores the potential of health education initiatives in enhancing community health literacy.

Besides, the "Gift of Life" campaign encompassed blood and organ donation. The event witnessed 55 successful blood donations, with several first-time donors contributing. Additionally, 63 individuals registered as organ donors, exemplifying the community's altruism and potential to save lives.



Figure 1: Organ Donation Booth

### **Green Publicity Strategies**

A distinguishing feature of the event was its commitment to environmentally responsible practices in publicity. Instead of traditional printed materials, the organizing committee adopted digital channels such as e-posters, social media platforms, and WhatsApp groups to disseminate information. A press release distributed a week before the event included statements from key figures, including UTS Vice Chancellor Prof. Datuk Dr. Khairuddin Ab Hamid and hospital director Dr. Nanthakumar A/L Thirunavukkarasu, underscoring its significance. Adding a creative dimension to the event, a photo contest was held, with participants sharing their experiences on social media platforms. In addition to the photo contest, the event featured a sponsored lucky draw, further enhancing community participation and fostering a sense of collective well-being. The event commenced with a creative gimmick video, produced in collaboration with the UTS School of Computing and Creative Media. This video not only promoted local food and medication knowledge but also addressed the pressing issue of rabies treatment, a pertinent concern in Sarawak.

### **Engaging Local Businesses**

Local businesses played a vital role in the event's success by providing sponsorships and setting up exhibition booths. No vendor fees were charged, and basic equipment support was provided. These collaborative efforts not only benefited local businesses but also enriched the event experience for attendees.

### **Participants Feedbacks**

The feedback received from event attendees underscores the profound impact and significance of the "Cultivation of Health Literacy" event. Attendees expressed newfound appreciation for the intricacies of pharmacy work, acknowledging the collaborative efforts involving multiple steps to ensure medication safety. Many highlighted the event's importance for Sibü, emphasizing the need for such initiatives in the community. The insights gained from the palliative care unit left a lasting impression, teaching attendees valuable lessons in comforting those at the end of life. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the role-play experiences, gaining a deeper understanding of pharmacists' efforts to provide better care for the public. Notably, UTS students showcased their knowledge, effectively explaining allergic and adverse reactions to their peers. Finally, the suggestion for the event to span multiple days underscores the appetite for continued health education within the community. These diverse testimonials collectively demonstrate the event's positive influence on attendees' knowledge and perspective on healthcare.

### **Conclusion**

The "Cultivation of Health Literacy" event in Sibü, Sarawak, stands as a notable example of a comprehensive health awareness initiative. The success of the Health Awareness Event 2022 was a result of collaborative efforts between UTS, Sibü Hospital, and the Sarawak Midwives Association. This unity and shared commitment exemplified the importance of community partnership in advancing health and well-being. Through innovative strategies, collaborations with local businesses, and a strong commitment to education and community engagement, the event succeeded in advancing health literacy and fostering a healthier and more informed community. This paper highlights the event's structure, strategies, and its significant impact on community health, serving as a blueprint for future initiatives aimed at improving health literacy and fostering healthier communities.



Figure 2: Event Committee from UTS, Sibuh Hospital and Sarawak Midwives Association

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