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The National Cancer Society Malaysia offers a wide range of services, says Zuraidah.

Ranjit urges women with breast cancer not to delay seeking treatment.

LIFE

A cuppa for charity

Host a tea party to help raise cancer awareness in the inaugural *Jamuan Teh Malaysia* fund-raising event. **KASMIAH MUSTAPHA** writes.

WHAT could be more exciting than having a tea party with friends while donating to a worthy cause at the same time?

The National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM), together with the Breast Cancer Welfare Association (BCWA) are organising the inaugural fund-raising event *Jamuan Teh Malaysia*. The fund would be used to raise cancer awareness as well as help both patients and survivors.

It is modelled after Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, which is held annually by the Australian Cancer Council.

From Aug 13 to 16, individuals, organisations, communities or schools can host a tea party at the venue of their choice. It can either be a breakfast, mid-morning tea break, high-tea or BBQ dinner.

The only requisite is that guests need to make a donation.

The money raised will then be divided equally between the NCSM and BCWA.

BCWA president Ranjit Kaur said the idea was mooted by Cancer Council Queensland, Australia.

"At one of our training sessions with them last year, it was suggested that we hold such an event to raise funds. It is such a success in Australia that we thought we ought to give it a try, too."

She said the money will be used to disseminate information on breast cancer self-examination and breast health workshops, provide psychological support for new patients and non-medical aids such as prosthesis and wigs. It will also be used to raise awareness on the need for early detection.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in Malaysia. Many only seek treatment when the disease is in the advanced stage. The number of women with stage three and four of the disease are between 50 and 60 per cent at the Kuala Lumpur Hospital and between 30 and 40 per cent at University Malaya Medical Centre in Petaling Jaya.

"Studies by local doctors have found that the delay is due to poor referral systems, a lack of availability of specialised healthcare, especially in rural areas, strong belief in traditional medicine, poverty, lack of awareness, fear and denial.

"Women are also reluctant to seek early treatment for fear that their husbands will leave them if they had mastectomies."

Ranjit said that as a support group formed by breast cancer survivors, BCWA's aim is to offer emotional, social and practical support for patients and their families.

BCWA also educates the public about cancer to create a well-informed community on breast health and breast self-awareness, and to rectify misconceptions.

NCSM honorary advisor Datuk Zuraidah Atan said the event is also to stress that early detection is vital.

"The money raised will be used to upgrade the facilities at our building. The building houses four of our centres, which offer cancer education, screening and diagnostic services, treatments as well as support and palliative care."

It runs the Women's Cancer Detection and Breast Clinic, which offers mammography examinations, ultrasounds, pap smear and bone density tests, as well as counselling and support programmes.

"We also run a number of programmes such as the urban poor project for underprivileged women to increase their awareness on cancer detection methods and to encourage them to go for screening and tests. These programmes are either subsidised or offered free to eligible women."

She hoped *Jamuan Teh Malaysia* will be another of NCSM's mammoth fund-raising events.

With the tagline "Every cup is worth it, the fight against cancer", it is hoped that Malaysians will give their support to this event.

For details, call 03-7954-0133 or 03-2698-7300 or log on to http://jamuanteh malaysia.blogspot.com

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(From left) Zuraidah, BCWA patron Datuk Akmal Abd. Salam and Australian High Commissioner Penny Williams showing the invitation to *Jamuan Teh Malaysia*.