



Health Ministry worker at a Covid-19 Low-Risk Quarantine and Treatment centre at the Malaysia Agro Exposition Park Serdang in February. Experts say the country's high vaccination coverage should be able to protect most people. FILE PIC



Associate Professor
Dr Malina Osman



Professor Datuk
Dr N.K.S.
Tharmaseelan

HIGH VACCINATION RATE

EXPERTS: FOCUS ON LONG COVID, VIRUS STUDIES

They say new waves will come and go, unlikely to affect transition to endemic phase

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WHILE the country's Covid-19 infections continue to see upward and downward trends, authorities should continue focusing on long Covid treatments and relevant studies on the virus.

Epidemiologist and biostatistician Associate Professor Dr Malina Osman of Universiti Putra Malaysia said apart from post-Covid healthcare, relevant studies on vaccines, as well as patient and close contact navigation systems (the use of electronic bracelets) should continue.

"I (also) hope improvements for HIDE, or Hotspot Identification for Dynamic Engagement, and the study on negative pressure ambulance (on containment of Covid-19) introduced during the pandemic will continue as well," she said.

On the possibility of a new wave of Covid-19, Dr Malina said it would be "almost similar to the Omicron wave early this year".

"Even if the numbers increase,

most of them are less serious cases as majority of the people have been vaccinated against the virus," she said.

More than four million Covid-19 infections have been recorded in Malaysia, which means about 12 per cent of the 32 million population here have been infected with the virus.

At least 10,000 recovered patients had received treatment for long Covid at the Health Ministry's rehabilitation centres, including in-patient treatments.

The ministry regularly advises recovered Covid patients to seek medical attention should they experience shortness of breath, fatigue, cough and muscle pain.

While most Covid-19 restrictions had been lifted, Dr Malina said the public should continue to exercise caution.

For those who had yet to get the full dosage of the Covid-19 vaccine or the booster shot, she urged them to get the shots at the designated centres.

She said the possible new Covid wave would unlikely affect the country's transition from the pandemic to endemic phase, thanks to the high vaccination coverage that should be able to protect most people.

Former Malaysian Medical Association president Professor Datuk Dr N.K.S. Tharmaseelan said like dengue, malaria and influenza, the Covid-19 wave might come and go.

The Health Ministry's statistics revealed that there was a 40 per

cent increase in dengue cases in the same period last year, he said.

Just in the last week of April this year, Malaysia logged 1,021 dengue cases. The disease is endemic in more than 100 countries.

"This is despite the fact dengue has been around for decades. Covid-19, however, is a new infection which we have yet to fully know its mutation prospects and treatment.

"So, it will be here for some time, probably a long time."

He said spikes and slumps in the infection trend would continue just like any other endemic diseases.

Dr Tharmaseelan echoed similar views that the country's high vaccination rate would cushion the severity of symptoms if there was a spike in cases.

"Even 30 per cent of the children have been vaccinated against Covid.

"The majority of Malaysians have adopted the government's standard operating procedures for Covid-19 as a way of life."

He said the transition to the endemic phase was slowly taking shape and after some time, Malaysians would have to accept that Covid-19 would be here to stay.

Dr Tharmaseelan said high-risk groups, children, senior citizens and those with comorbidities should be monitored more closely and encouraged to take their fourth vaccine dose to boost protection against the virus.