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COVID-19 VACCINE FOR CHILDREN 3 TO 11 YEARS WILL ACCELERATE HERD IMMUNITY FOR THE WHOLE POPULATION

SHAH ALAM, 15 OCTOBER, 2021 – Vaccinating children aged 3 to 11 years will likely be necessary to reach herd immunity at a faster pace in supporting our race to protect the whole population against the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the highly contagious Wuhan and other variants spreading in communities across the country and schools will reopen next year, parents are eager for children of all ages to have protection against COVID-19 virus infection.

Currently, only children aged 12 to 17 years are eligible to be vaccinated with the COVID-19 vaccine, but it would soon become available for younger age groups. The Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine has been approved in China for children aged 3 to 17 years. The majority of adverse effects were either mild or moderate and were most likely to be the common pain at the injection site.

Dr Alexis M. Kalergis, Professor and Director of Immunology and Immunotherapy Millennium Institute from Chile said based on the pediatric population in China's vaccinated children, the vaccine has shown a high safety and efficacy result.

“Here in Chile, the inactivated vaccines are commonly used amongst the population for other diseases such as polio and hepatitis. We have received a high recommendation from the Ministry of Health and Scientific Committee, where they have been supporting the approval for the emergency use of COVID-19 vaccine in children aged 6 and above.

“To date, it has been moving efficiently and the adverse effect are very rare. And of course, in our study, we have collected good data for its safety and efficacy,” he said during a virtual webinar entitled “COVID-19 Booster Shots and Vaccination for Children: Moving forward with experiences from China, Chile and Indonesia” organised by Pharmaniaga Berhad recently.

Dr M. Rahman Roestan, Operational Director of PT Bio Farma and Vice-Chairman OIC – VMG from Indonesia said the deployment of children vaccination is important to reach herd immunity.

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“Based on the Indonesian health expert perspective, more clinical trials are necessary to determine the safety and efficacy of the COVID-19 vaccine amongst the children. After we have reached approximately 70% of the adult population, children vaccination has started right after.

“This pandemic has impacted many people, especially children. Mostly, it will affect their social skills, education, physical and mental health, as well as limited social interaction. We have retrieved the data that 78% of parents agree to vaccinate their children once the vaccine is available,” said Dr M Rahman, who is also one of the speakers in the webinar.

He said more than 64% of parents have agreed to send their children to school if the authority implemented strict protocols.

“We are now in the midst of registration for children aged 3 to 17 years and have submitted clinical trials for phase I and II to the Indonesian’s National Risk Assessment (NRA), the result looks promising based on its safety profile.”

Currently, Sinovac COVID-19 global clinical trial has started in South Africa with Chile, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Kenya participating for children aged 3 to 17 years.

With the total number of children under 18 which make up a significant proportion of 28.3% in Malaysia’s population of 32.7 million in 2020, according to the Children Statistics for Malaysia 2020, it concluded that the faster we can vaccinate all children and adolescent in the country, we can achieve herd immunity against the COVID-19.

Speaking on the halalan toyyiban (allowed and permissible for consumption with relation to Syariah law as long as they are safe and not harmful) aspect, Dr M Rahman said as a country with the most Muslim population globally, it is vital to consider the halalan toyyiban aspect.

“For the COVID-19 vaccine, we realised that safety, quality and efficacy is our main priority. When we finalised Sinovac as our partner, we consulted our Ulama council and regulatory authority to audit the Sinovac site in China.

“They reviewed the site of the vaccine manufacturing plant, material and equipment used, which gives no doubts about its halalan toyyiban. Hence, we have successfully obtained Halal certification in Indonesia.”

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Besides Dr Alexis and Dr M Rahman, other speakers who participated in the webinar were Dr Ajit Pal Singh, Head of Biologic/Vaccine Specialist of Pharmaniaga Berhad, Dr Badarulhisam Abdul Rahman, Head of Research and Development of Pharmaniaga Berhad and Mr Weining Meng, Senior Director of Oversea Business, Sinovac Biotech Co Ltd from China.

Pharmaniaga is the leading pharmaceutical Company of Boustead Holdings Berhad group of companies, and together with Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera, are the major shareholders of the Company.

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About Pharmaniaga Berhad

Pharmaniaga is the leading pharmaceutical company of Boustead Holdings Berhad Group of Companies, which together with the Armed Forces Fund Board, are the major shareholders of the Company. Listed on the Main Board of Bursa Malaysia, Pharmaniaga's core businesses are generic pharmaceuticals manufacturing; research and development; marketing and sales; warehousing and distribution of pharmaceutical and medical products; supply, trading and installation of medical and hospital equipment as well as community pharmacy.

With a vision to be the premier Malaysian pharmaceutical company, Pharmaniaga is guided by its philosophy of 'Do It Right Always' and is empowered by its motto of Passion for Patients. Strengthened by nine manufacturing plants, nationwide logistics and distribution in Malaysia and Indonesia as well as products registered in 15 countries, Pharmaniaga Group is positioned to be a regional player in the international pharmaceutical arena.

Forward-looking statements

This release may contain certain forward-looking statements with respect to the financial conditions, results of operations and business of the Group and certain plans and objectives of Pharmaniaga Berhad with respect to these items. By their nature, forward-looking statements involve risk and uncertainty because they relate to events and depend on circumstances that will occur in the future and there are many factors that could cause actual results and developments to differ materially from those expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements.

Issued for Pharmaniaga Group by Corporate Communications Department, Pharmaniaga Berhad. For media enquiries, please contact Dato' Zuhri Iskandar Kamarzaman, Corporate Services Deputy Director of Pharmaniaga Berhad at 03-3342 999 ext 434 or by email zuhri@pharmaniaga.com.