

# DANGER SIGNS IN UNWELL CHILDREN UNDER FIVE: CAN THE CAREGIVERS IDENTIFY THEM?

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## INTRODUCTION



Target 3.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to end all preventable deaths of children under five years old by 2030. Nearly 30% of the mortality cases in Malaysia are preventable and family factor including delay in seeking care is a known contributing factor. Presence of any danger sign in an unwell child indicates a serious problem. Hence, early detection of danger signs by caregivers is a key strategy for early medical care. These important signs have been incorporated in parents' education materials following the expansion of Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI).

## OBJECTIVES

We aim to explore the caregivers' ability to identify danger signs of unwell children.

## METHODOLOGY

We recruited a total of 393 caregivers of under five children who attended eight maternal and child health clinics in Kuantan, Pahang between January and August 2020 in this cross-sectional study. They were asked to identify the 10 primary danger signs from a checklist of 20 common signs and symptoms for unwell children written in Malay language. Data was analysed with SPSS 24.0 version.

## RESULTS

### Sociodemography profile (n= 393)

#### CAREGIVERS

- Mean age 32 ± 6.070 year
- Female 90.6%
- Malay 89.3%
- Urban 75.1%

#### CHILDREN

- Mean age 24 ± 17.971 months
- Male: Female 1:1
- Immunization up to age 96.4%

#### INFORMATION SOURCE

- Health care providers 64.4%
- Child health record book 56%
- Internet 55.2%

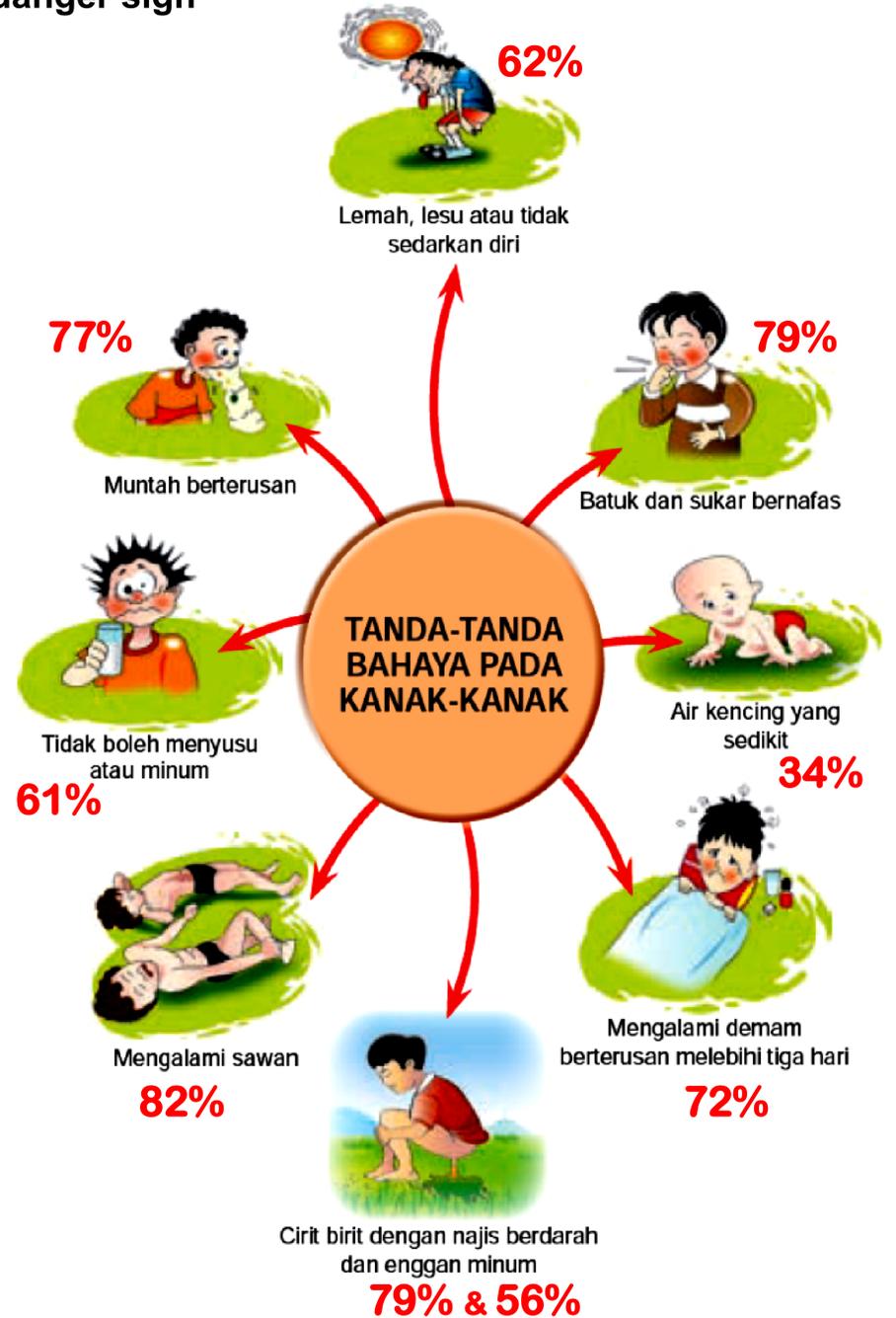
#### CAREGIVERS' EXPERIENCE

- Encounter danger signs 31.3%
- Chronic illness in children 22.1%
- Death in children 6.9%



## RESULTS

### Proportion of caregivers who correctly identified each danger sign



## CONCLUSION

Out of the 10 danger signs, nine were correctly identified by most caregivers (61.8% - 81.9%), except for "reduce urine output" (33.8%). For the non-danger signs, "high fever" (80.9%) and "persistent cough" (57%) were chosen by majority as danger signs while the rest of signs received only 5.1 to 39.9%.

Most of the danger signs in unwell children under 5 are correctly identified by majority of caregivers. This shows that empowering caregivers with seeking early treatment and appropriate home care is of paramount importance. On the same note, non-physical sign such as "reduce urine output" may need to be emphasized during safety netting advice.

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