

## MOBILE HEALTH SERVICE FOR ORANG ASLI IN MERSING: BRIDGING THE GAP THROUGH HOPE AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*INTRODUCTION: Orang Asli, the indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, accounted for 0.6% of Malaysia's total population mostly residing in remote and underserved areas, resulting in limited access to healthcare services. Mobile health service aims to bridge the healthcare gap by providing comprehensive medical services directly to the communities. OBJECTIVE: This study explores the implementation and impact of the mobile health clinic serving the Orang Asli communities in Mersing, Johor. METHODOLOGY: A retrospective cross-sectional study was performed. Data from registry and patients' health records from January until December 2023 is collected then analysed. The outcome of interest were the numbers of visits and consultations, the maternal and under-5 mortality rate and also coverage of national vaccination program. RESULTS: In 2023, the clinic conducted over 1,320 health consultations which accounted for 72% of total Orang Asli population in Mersing, addressing a wide range of health concerns within the community and provided health education to over 1000 individuals including school students. Notably, there were zero cases of maternal and under-5 mortality among Orang Asli in Mersing in 2023. The vaccination program among pregnant mothers and children achieved a remarkable 95% coverage. CONCLUSION: The mobile health clinic successfully addressed several barriers to healthcare access and it has proven to be an effective model for delivering healthcare to the Orang Asli communities in Mersing where there are good health outcomes. To ensure long term success, it is essential to address the identified challenges and strengthen partnerships between healthcare providers, government agencies, NGOs and the Orang Asli communities.*

Keywords: Orang Asli, Mobile health clinic, Healthcare access, Rural healthcare

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