

Press Release

For Immediate Release

**Sun Life Financial Asia Diabetes Awareness Study reveals
low awareness of gestational diabetes risk among pregnant women**

- **5-market study demystifies diabetes, echoing the theme of 2017 World Diabetes Day – “Women and Diabetes – our right to a healthy future”**
- **Lack of basic understanding of diabetes, including the types and nature of diabetes as well as life expectancy of diabetics**
- **Bias towards diabetics: dangerous driving, laziness and lack of energy**

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, November 10, 2017 — The latest Sun Life Financial Asia Diabetes Awareness Study reveals an alarming knowledge gap in diabetes. 30% of Asian women who are or were pregnant in the past three years are unaware of the risk of developing gestational diabetes in pregnancy. Whereas, one in seven births in Asia is affected by gestational diabetes¹.

The prevalence of diabetes is a growing health challenge in the region. “Sun Life, as a leading international financial services organization with a strategic focus on promoting awareness and prevention of diabetes, has commissioned the Sun Life Financial Asia Diabetes Awareness Study to demystify this chronic disease. The study aims at bridging the knowledge gap and promoting positive perception change towards diabetes, helping people live healthier lives – both physically and mentally, in addition to achieving lifetime financial security.” said Jeremy Young, Chief Marketing Officer, Sun Life Financial Asia.

Bridging the knowledge gap

Across the region, Malaysia leads with the highest percentage of prevalence of diabetes in Asia at 17.9% followed by Hong Kong and Philippines at 9.6% and 6.9% respectively. 31% of respondents in the region do not even know there is more than one type of diabetes. The survey also finds that 42% of the people spoken to are not aware that pregnant women have higher risk of developing diabetes.

Commenting on the findings, Raymond Lew, Chief Executive Office & President / Country Head, Sun Life Malaysia, said: “As evidenced by Malaysians’ perception of diabetes, more efforts should be devoted to address the issue. Sun Life Malaysia has been working hand in hand with Diabetes Malaysia to provide financial sponsorships of diabetes monitoring supplies to diabetic children and adults from underprivileged families and will continue our efforts to do so.”

¹ Statistics by [International Diabetes Federation](#). According to [American Diabetes Association](#), if a pregnant woman has gestational diabetes during her pregnancy, there is a good chance that her diabetes will go away immediately after the delivery.

The survey also finds that respondents believe diabetes decreases life expectancy by 19 years on average (Malaysia: 18 years, Hong Kong and Indonesia: 16 years, Vietnam: 11 years, the Philippines: 33 years), when in fact, the average is between 10 and 12 years², showing a significant gap between perception and reality.

Managing diabetes healthcare costs

Over 30% of the respondents were unaware that there is more than one type of diabetes. Besides that, the survey also unveils that one third of the respondents do not know that most cases of type 2 diabetes are preventable, although diabetic respondents surveyed portrayed a better knowledge about diabetes myths as compared to the general population but 50% of them also misunderstand that the disease is curable.

Almost half (45%) of the respondents think that diabetes is a cost burden on public healthcare systems. On average, respondents across the region estimate that a person with diabetes has to pay approximately RM7508 for treatment every year.

“As medical cost continues to increase, the alarming prevalence of diabetes in Asia will continue to put economic burden on the public healthcare systems, as well as on diabetics and their families.” added Young. “Sun Life is dedicated to and will continue to play a pivotal role in the financing of related healthcare costs to drive a win-win outcome for individuals and the society.”

Driving positive perception change

The study reveals the public’s bias towards diabetics and strong associations with unfavorable characteristics, such as dangerous driving (37%), laziness (38%), lack of energy (62%), not being athletic (43%) and having mood swings (43%). Malaysia and Indonesia particularly see a higher percentage, 73% and 71% respectively, assuming that diabetics lack energy.

Lew commented, “Social stigma towards diabetics, as confirmed by our regional Diabetes Awareness Study, adversely impacts the mental health and wellness of diabetics, yet it is often overlooked. With Sun Life’s purpose in helping people live healthier lives – both physically and mentally in addition to achieving lifetime financial security, we are keen to drive, and hopeful to see, positive perception change and reduce bias against diabetes. We will continue to devote our efforts in events such as our annual Sun Life Malaysia SHiNE Resolution Run on 14 January 2018, to encourage active lifestyle and drive positive perception change.”

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² [Asia Diabetes Foundation](#)



About the Sun Life Financial Asia Diabetes Awareness Study

The Sun Life Financial Asia Diabetes Awareness Study is a five-market regional study on the public's understanding and perception towards diabetes inaugurated in 2017. The research is conducted by Ipsos, an independent market research house, in late September 2017 through online interviews with 2,119 Asians aged between 25 and 60 in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Vietnam. The samples include the general public, diabetics and women who currently are, or were pregnant in the past three years.

About Sun Life Malaysia

Sun Life Malaysia (Sun Life Malaysia Assurance Berhad and Sun Life Malaysia Takaful Berhad) is a joint venture by Sun Life Financial Inc. and Avicennia Capital Sdn. Bhd., a fully owned Khazanah Nasional Berhad investment holding company, specialising in Insurance and Takaful. Sun Life Malaysia offers a comprehensive range of life insurance and Takaful products and services to Malaysians across the country and is focused on helping customers achieve financial security. Sun Life Malaysia distributes its products through a range of distribution channels including bancassurance, direct marketing, telemarketing and government and corporate business.

For more information please visit www.sunlifemalaysia.com.

About Sun Life Financial

Sun Life Financial is a leading international financial services organization providing a diverse range of insurance, wealth and asset management solutions to individuals and corporate Clients. Sun Life Financial has operations in a number of markets worldwide, including Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, India, China, Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Bermuda. As of September 30, 2017, Sun Life Financial had total assets under management of CAD\$934 billion.

Sun Life Financial Inc. trades on the Toronto (TSX), New York (NYSE) and Philippine (PSE) stock exchanges under the ticker symbol SLF. For more information please visit www.sunlife.com.

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