







increased incidence of aplastic anaemia in Sabah. In most western centres, acute leukaemia is five to ten times more common than aplastic anaemia<sup>14</sup>.

The male-to-female ratio of 3.4 is also higher than that reported previously, although a male preponderance has been noted. This again could reflect an environmental occupational factor in aetiology.

The ethnic distribution of patients with 77% Kadazan-Dusun needs further investigation. This is an ethnic group indigenous to the state of Sabah and forms 18% of the total population. Majority of these peoples are rural dwellers with an agricultural background and of lower socio-economic status. The observed increase in incidence among these peoples suggest a common ethnic environmental factor or genetic predisposition. Environmental aetiological possibilities include traditional treatments, agricultural toxins and soil-related marrow-suppressive pathogens.

Aplastic anaemia has a high morbidity and is associated with significant mortality. Further detailed prospective case-control studies are indicated in the state of Sabah to identify the true incidence of aplastic anaemia and the aetiological factors accounting for these observations.

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