

## Palliative society turns to horses as pet therapy for cancer patients



IPOH, March 4 — Having dogs and cats for pet therapy is so out of date. Be ready for the use of horse as therapy. — Pictures by Farhan Najib

Patients interviewed by *Malay Mail* said this was their first time getting up close with a horse.

Nor Zamin Saad, 59, said it was nice to get out of the house once in awhile.

The lung cancer patient said if she stays at home, she has her 10 cats to keep her company.

"I was very excited when I was informed by Hospital Raja Permaisuri Bainun, where I am seeking treatment, called me last week and informed me I have been selected for the horse therapy," said the former nurse.

The mother of three hoped such therapy could be continued for other patients.

Sharing her sentiment is former clerk Tham Saw Wan, 45.

Tham, a breast cancer patient, said it was nice to touch the horse.

"I love all kinds of animals," said Tham, who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012.

Collaborating with BP Polo Club, two mares were brought to Perak Palliative Care Society (PPCS) where 10 selected cancer patients were given the opportunity to get close to them.

PPCS volunteer co-ordinator Cheong Sau Yen said the patients were aged between 84 and 45. "This is the first time we are bringing in animals for therapy. Horses were chosen due to proximity of the club, that is located less than five kilometres from our society," she said.

Cheong said the idea to have animal therapy was mooted two months ago.

"Horse was also the natural choice as some patients may be allergic to the hair of other animals," she added.

The mares, aged four and seven, were brought to the society, located at Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah with a horse transporter converted from a trailer.

The horses, named Palomo and Tobiano, are polo ponies. Their handlers said the mares were still in active service.



Aside from letting the patients take pictures with the horses, they were also allowed to take a ride on them.

