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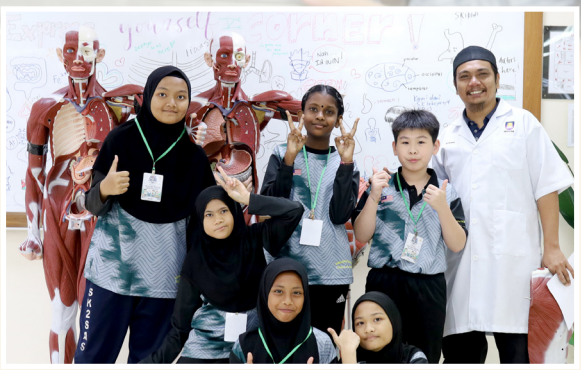
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SITI NUR UMAIRAH BATRISYIA delivering an engaging presentation on Nature's Pharmacy and the medicinal properties of selected local herbs.

NATURE'S PHARMACY: FROM MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE TO COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Dr. Muhammad Fairuz Azmi, Siti Nur Umairah Batrisyia Mohd Rosli, Adni Ahlami Abdul Aziz, Alissa Nadhirah Mohd Nazri, Nor Alysha Safiah Adlan, Dina Khairul Anuar & Zulfa Kamalia Azamuddin

On 12 August 2026, six second-year medical students from the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), conducted *Nature's Pharmacy*, an elective community engagement programme at Sekolah Menengah Integrasi Teras Islam (SMITI) Subang Bestari. The programme introduced students aged 13-16 to the medicinal properties and safe use of selected local herbs through an educational talk and



interactive games.

The project was organised by Siti Nur Umairah Batrisyia Mohd Rosli, Adni Ahlami Abdul Aziz, Alissa Nadhirah Mohd Nazri, Nor Alysha Safiah Adlan, Dina Khairul Anuar and Zulfa Kamalia Azamuddin. Students independently researched scientific literature and translated their findings into age-appropriate educational materials, strengthening their skills in evidence appraisal and science communication.

The students presented three familiar herbs: ginger, torch ginger and turmeric. Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) contains bioactive compounds such as gingerols and shogaols. It is commonly used to relieve nausea and digestive discomfort, while research also suggests antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. However, many antimicrobial, antidiabetic and anticancer effects remain largely based on laboratory or animal studies and should not be interpreted as established clinical treatments[1].

Torch ginger, or bunga kantan (*Etlingera elatior*), contains flavonoids, anthocyanins, tannins and other phenolic compounds. Traditionally, different parts of the plant have been used for wound care, digestive complaints and reducing inflammation. Experimental studies have reported antioxidant, antimicrobial and glucose-lowering potential. Nevertheless, much of the evidence remains preclinical, with reported antidiabetic and kidney-protective



PARTICIPANTS gathered in the centre of the hall for an engaging session of the Herbs Trail board game.

effects demonstrated in animal models rather than human patients[2].

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) contains curcuminoids, particularly curcumin, which possesses antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Turmeric has traditionally been used for digestive discomfort, minor swelling and body aches. Although curcumin has shown potential benefits for inflammatory conditions, its limited absorption and variability in supplement formulations affect its clinical usefulness. It should therefore be viewed as a possible complementary agent and not a replacement for prescribed treatment[3].

This distinction is especially important because society is increasingly exposed to myths and exaggerated claims surrounding herbs and dietary supplements. Products labelled "natural" are often assumed to be completely safe, while testimonials circulated through social media may be trusted more than professional advice.



PARTICIPANTS used their sense of smell to identify different herbs during the sensory challenge in the Herbs Trail game.

Consequently, some individuals reduce or discontinue prescribed medications without consulting their doctors. Herbs and supplements may cause adverse effects, interact with medicines or delay effective treatment. Health education must therefore promote both appreciation of traditional knowledge and respect for evidence-based medical care[4].

The programme's main activity, *Herbs Trail*, incorporated a board game, group discussions, hidden-object challenges, word searches, puzzles, drawing and sensory activities. Pre- and post-programme assessments were administered to evaluate learning. By turning scientific information into games, the programme encouraged active participation, teamwork and better retention compared with one-way teaching.

Following the activities, Dr Muhammad Fairuz Azmi delivered a career-sharing session on recognising personal strengths, exploring career options and developing the discipline, communication skills and resilience required to achieve future

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Such programmes benefit both communities and medical students. Secondary students gain scientific literacy and learn to evaluate health claims critically, while medical students develop leadership, teamwork, creativity and the ability to communicate complex information clearly. *Nature's Pharmacy* demonstrated that an elective attachment can go beyond observation by transforming research into meaningful community education.



DR. MUHAMMAD FAIRUZ AZMI shares insights from his career journey and guides the students on planning their own pathways from aspiration to achievement.

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