

Medicine Price Transparency May Have Serious, Unintended Consequences For GP Clinics — MMA

By CodeBlue | 13 November 2024

MMA has expressed concern that the new medicine price transparency policy could have “serious, unintended consequences” for private GP clinics. MMA says requiring the display of all drug prices is impractical and will significantly raise operational costs.



Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira speaks at the Industry Leadership Summit 2024 in Kuala Lumpur on October 10, 2024, organised by the Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy and supported by PMCare Sdn Bhd. Photo by Saw Siow Feng.

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) acknowledges the government’s recent announcement on medicine price transparency. While we support the goal of improving patient access to cost information, we are concerned that this policy could have serious, unintended consequences for private general practitioner (GP) clinics, which play a critical role in providing primary care services across Malaysia.

Implementing price transparency in GP clinics by requiring the display of the price of every medication is not a practical approach. GP clinics provide professional health care services, not retail transactions, and displaying a full list of medication prices at the counter would be administratively burdensome and significantly increase operational costs.

These added costs, alongside the stagnant GP fee schedule and steadily rising expenses, would strain clinic operations and may even lead to closures, ultimately reducing patients' access to essential health care.

Furthermore, turning clinics into retail-like spaces risks eroding the quality of the doctor-patient relationship, shifting focus from health care to price comparisons.

GP clinics have long relied on modest margins from medication sales to manage operational costs and keep services affordable. This policy affects that balance, making it increasingly difficult for clinics to remain viable.

The MMA urges the government to address the practical challenges and consequences of such policies and to prioritize the strengthening of primary care.

We urge for a thorough review and update of the GP fee schedule, an issue which has been brought up by the MMA many times before, as the consultation fee has remained stagnant for the last two decades.

With regard to the issue of the sustainability of GPs as the backbone of community health care, MMA also calls for the immediate regulation of Third-Party Administrators (TPAs), an issue that has seen inaction since the 1990s and has had an increasing effect on GP practice over the years.

With over 12,000 GP clinics nationwide, it is crucial that policies support these essential community health care providers, enabling them to continue serving as the first line of care for millions across the country.

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