



# New MMA president makes doctor retention top priority

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Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan says retaining doctors is crucial as Malaysia faces rising healthcare demands from an ageing population and increasing NCDs.



*MMA president Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan said that to retain doctors, attention must be paid to career progression, working conditions, professional development, and opportunities to specialise and subspecialise. (MMA pic)*

**PETALING JAYA:** Retaining doctors in Malaysia's public healthcare system will be the Malaysian Medical Association's top priority under its new president, Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan.

MMA said Sivanaesan, a family medicine practitioner, has held various leadership

roles in the association, including chairman of MMA Selangor, and chairman of its private practitioners section

Speaking at the MMA annual banquet in Ipoh yesterday, Sivanaesan said retaining doctors was crucial as Malaysia faced rising healthcare demands from an ageing

population and increasing non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

He said simply increasing the number of medical graduates would not solve the problem, with greater attention needed on career progression, working conditions, professional development, and opportunities to specialise and subspecialise.

“Training a doctor takes many years and requires significant investment. When experienced doctors leave the public system, we lose their experience, expertise and continuity of care,” he said.

Sivanaesan also called for a clearer and more predictable pathway for doctors seeking specialisation and subspecialisation, saying this would support both career development and workforce planning while helping retain talent.

On private healthcare, he said MMA would continue engaging stakeholders on issues involving third-party administrators and insurers.

He also urged the government to make greater use of more than 11,000 private GPs nationwide in preventing, detecting and

managing NCDs, saying they offered convenient access to patients.

Sivanaesan said the health ministry’s “One Person, One Record” digital medical records initiative, expected within months, could enable stronger public-private collaboration.

He said the increased digital health allocation, from RM650 million to RM1 billion, could accelerate implementation.

He also said Malaysia must prepare for an ageing population by strengthening chronic disease management, rehabilitation, long-term care and other support services.

Sivanaesan expressed sadness over the Sept 8 helicopter crash near the Long Lellang short take-off and landing airport in Ulu Baram, Sarawak, which killed five people, including four healthcare workers on a Flying Doctor Service mission.

He said the tragedy highlighted the risks faced by healthcare workers serving remote communities, and stressed the need for appropriate safety measures, resources and support.