



# Medical groups hope primary healthcare gets more funds

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**A group representing private doctors says more funds are needed in view of the rising number of people with non-communicable diseases.**



A health think tank says the country needs a national health insurance scheme as the 'budget-to-budget' approach was no longer sufficient.

## **PETALING JAYA:**

Medical groups have urged the government to provide more funds in the 2025 budget for primary healthcare in view of the rise of non-communicable diseases (NCD), such as diabetes, heart disease and hypertension.

Almost 2.3 million adults suffer from these three diseases, according to health ministry figures.

The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations Malaysia (FPMPAM) said the funds for primary care services should have a special focus to integrate preventive care.

Federation president Dr Shanmuganathan Ganeson said a review of current treatment and management of these diseases was also needed, along with skills training for general practitioners.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said some 13,000 GPs in private practice were currently under-utilised and he called for a public-private collaboration to improve management of NCDs – with private GPs being paid a sufficient amount to manage the cases.

Kalwinder also suggested that tax rebates be provided to doctors who take part in courses or conferences to improve their skills on primary healthcare services.

Azrul Khalid, the CEO and founder of the Galen Centre think tank reiterated his call for a national insurance scheme. He said the country has reached its limits of a tax-based system and could no longer stick with the current budget-to-budget approach for maintaining the national health service.

The insurance scheme could ensure better pay for healthcare workers, provide for more doctors and medical technicians to be recruited and retained, and ensure ageing infrastructure is modernised.

“The scheme would apply to all workers and be based on a sliding scale linked to monthly income and age. Patients would be able to access private hospitals as well as the national health service.

A national health insurance scheme was previously proposed by the Najib Razak administration but was scrapped in 2013. The proposal was revived in a health white paper presented to Parliament in June last year.