

Malaysian Medical Association: Vaccination is a medical act, not a retail service

By Churchill Edward on October 17, 2025, Friday at 8:01 AM



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KUCHING (Oct 17): The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has strongly disagreed with recent calls to allow pharmacists to administer vaccines to the public.

“Vaccination is a medical procedure, not a retail service. It requires clinical assessment, identification of contraindications, and readiness to manage adverse or anaphylactic reactions,” said its president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo in a statement yesterday.

He said the process also involves strict adherence to cold chain management, documentation, and patient follow-up — all of which must be conducted in regulated clinical environments under qualified medical supervision.

“Importantly, doctors who administer vaccines carry medical-legal responsibility and are protected by professional indemnity insurance — a safeguard that ensures accountability and protects both the patient and practitioner.”

Dr Thirunavukarasu stressed that this framework of legal and professional responsibility is fundamental to patient safety.

He noted that Malaysia's private healthcare sector is among the most regulated in the region, governed by over 50 laws and regulations to ensure safety and quality of care.

Foremost among these, he said, are the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act (PHFSA) and the Medical Act, which stipulate that only licensed medical professionals may provide medical treatment, including vaccinations, in approved clinical settings.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said comparisons to the Philippines, where pharmacists are authorised to administer adult vaccines under the Philippine Pharmacy Act (RA 10918), are misleading without context.

"The law there was introduced out of necessity due to doctor shortages and access challenges across more than 7,600 islands.

"In Malaysia, with over 10,000 well-distributed GP (general practitioner) clinics, such an approach is unnecessary and could compromise patient safety, quality, and accountability."

He added that expanding vaccination duties beyond clinical settings in the name of convenience is misguided and risks undermining safety standards.

"This kind of task shifting — transferring clinical responsibilities traditionally performed by doctors to non-physician healthcare personnel — may be suitable in countries facing workforce shortages, but it is unjustified in Malaysia, where GP coverage is adequate and access to regulated care is easy," he said.

"Our GP clinics are easily accessible and embedded in communities. They played a critical frontline role during the Covid-19 pandemic by delivering vaccinations safely, managing complications, and maintaining continuity of care under proper clinical governance."

Dr Thirunavukarasu reiterated that commercial interests must never supersede patient safety and quality of care.

"Vaccination is not a transaction — it is a clinical act that carries accountability, responsibility, and duty of care," he said.

He added that the focus should remain on strengthening coordination, raising public awareness, and improving vaccine confidence through existing clinical networks — not creating parallel systems with diluted oversight.

According to a Bernama report on Wednesday, the Malaysian Pharmacists Society (MPS) had proposed expanding access to influenza vaccine nationwide and granting trained pharmacists authority to conduct community vaccination programmes.

MPS said the move aimed to curb rising infection cases in schools and reduce pressure on hospital emergency departments.