

MMA backs MMC ban on medical certificates via teleconsults

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Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo - President, Malaysian Medical Association

Malaysian Medical Association supports ban on sick certs after teleconsults, warns against platforms

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association has expressed strong support for the Malaysian Medical Council's recent decision to prohibit the issuance of medical certificates after teleconsultation sessions, calling it an overdue but essential clarification for practicing physicians.

In a statement, today, MMA President Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo emphasised that the directive serves as a crucial reminder to all Registered Medical Practitioners about their individual professional responsibilities.

The association highlighted troubling developments in healthcare delivery, particularly as the sector becomes increasingly influenced by corporate interests and digital commercial platforms.

“We are seeing a disturbing trend where clinical decisions are being dictated by non-medical administrators, insurers, and third-party platforms, often with cost containment as the driving force,” the statement read.

The MMA expressed particular concern about the expansion of telehealth services, warning that doctors risk being reduced to “mere processors of scripted care, devoid of context or continuity.”

The association stressed that while digital platforms and employers may avoid liability, doctors cannot escape their professional obligations.

“The patient-doctor relationship, and its associated duty of care remains sacred and legally enforceable,” Dr Thirunavukarasu stated.

He reminded practitioners that professional accountability stays with the physician regardless of who employs or engages them in the increasingly digitalized healthcare landscape.

Under Section 29 of the Medical Act 1971, the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) possesses full authority to discipline Registered Medical Practitioners found guilty of “infamous conduct in a professional respect.”

Such conduct encompasses serious professional misconduct including gross negligence, unethical practices, permitting non-clinical interference in medical decisions, document falsification, or failing to prioritise patient welfare.

Penalties can include removal from the medical register, practice suspension, financial penalties, or formal censure.

Significantly, the MMA emphasized that these consequences apply even when misconduct occurs under pressure from employers or digital platforms, as the duty of care is personal and cannot be outsourced or compromised.

The association strongly urged doctors to exercise independent clinical judgment consistently and maintain proper documentation of all decisions, particularly in situations involving teleconsultations, insurer-driven care models, or company-mandated medical policies.

“We strongly urge doctors to speak up when asked to act against professional ethics,” the statement declared, with the MMA pledging support for practitioners who uphold patient safety and professionalism despite commercial pressures.

The medical association also addressed employers, insurance companies, digital health platforms, and managed care operators, emphasising that healthcare innovation must not result in commodification.

“Ethical digitalisation, proper governance, and respect for medical autonomy must remain central to healthcare transformation,” Dr Thirunavukarasu stated.

He warned that any healthcare model prioritising cost over care will inevitably harm both patients and the medical profession’s integrity.

In his concluding remarks, the MMA president called on all stakeholders to maintain values of safety, accountability, and professionalism.

“The MMC’s statement must be a turning point – a clear signal that while innovation in healthcare is welcome, the foundation of our profession must never be compromised,” he said.

The statement comes amid growing debate about the role of telemedicine in Malaysian healthcare, particularly regarding the appropriate boundaries for remote medical consultations and the documentation they can legitimately produce.

The ban on issuing medical certificates following teleconsultations reflects ongoing efforts to balance technological advancement in healthcare delivery with traditional standards of medical practice and patient care.