

Inspect Pharmacies Using E- Prescription Services — Malaysian Medical Association

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MMA demands strict inspections and audits on all pharmacies utilising e-prescription services, citing reports of patients getting medicines without valid prescriptions, potentially violating the Poisons Act. NCD management is more than medicine dispensing.



Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira. Photo from Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia's Facebook page posted on August 20, 2024.

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is calling for stringent inspections and audits on e-prescription practices to ensure compliance with the Poisons Act and safeguard patient safety, particularly in the dispensing of long-term medications.

The association has raised concerns over recent notifications from some third-party administrators (TPAs) which mandate a shift towards pharmacy-based dispensing of medications via e-prescriptions.

MMA is deeply troubled by reports indicating that some patients are receiving medications without valid prescriptions from their treating doctors, a potential violation of the Poisons Act.

According to existing regulations, prescriptions should only be reissued for a limited period, typically up to two additional supplies. However, MMA has identified instances where prescriptions for follow-up medications are being issued by online doctors who have never physically examined or treated the patient.

This practice not only contravenes regulatory requirements, but also undermines the principles of safe and effective patient care.

The proper management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) requires more than just medication dispensing. It involves regular monitoring, clinical assessments, and necessary adjustments to treatment plans as per established clinical guidelines.

The indiscriminate issuance of e-prescriptions without proper medical oversight poses significant risks, particularly for patients with chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular diseases.

MMA is particularly concerned about the increasing prevalence of complications linked to poor NCD management, such as end-stage kidney disease, which has seen a worrying rise in recent years.

The lack of adequate supervision in long-term medication management may further escalate the burden of chronic diseases, leading to worsening patient outcomes and increased health care costs.

To address this issue, MMA urges the authorities to conduct thorough inspections and audits on all pharmacies utilising e-prescription services. Strict enforcement of the Poisons Act is essential to ensure that patient care is not compromised by improper dispensing practices.

The association stresses that while technology and digital health care solutions can enhance efficiency, they must be implemented responsibly and in full compliance with existing health care laws.

MMA calls for urgent action from the authorities to safeguard public health and uphold the integrity of the nation's health care system. MMA stands ready to engage with the relevant stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and regulatory bodies, to discuss measures that will strengthen patient safety in the digital health care landscape.

Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira is the president of the Malaysian Medical Association.