

Hold off making display of medicine pricing at GP clinics mandatory, says MMA

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PETALING JAYA: Making the display of medicine pricing mandatory at private clinics should be delayed until consultation fee issues are addressed and regulations on prescription drug sales are tightened, says the Malaysian Medical Association.

Its president Datuk Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said requiring the display of drug prices at private general practitioner (GP) clinics could threaten the sustainability of private primary care services and exacerbate the strain on public healthcare facilities.

"While MMA supports transparency in healthcare pricing, enforcing this policy without addressing the long-standing issue of GP consultation fees, which are unchanged for over 30 years, will endanger GP clinics and push more patients toward already overcrowded public healthcare facilities," he said in a statement on Saturday (Feb 22).

Private GP clinics, said Dr Kalwinder, have traditionally been the first point of care for many Malaysians, especially within the B40 and M40 communities.

He said the country has witnessed an oversupply of GP clinics due to an influx of contract doctors leaving government service, leading to intense competition and financial strain.

A previous MMA study also revealed that 60% of clinics operate under financial pressure, with numerous clinics barely breaking even or operating at a loss, he said.

Dr Kalwinder reiterated that GPs do not function like retail businesses but provide comprehensive care regulated by numerous acts.

"Medicine dispensing is not a separate service but an integral part of the regulated, patient-centred medical process.

"With operational costs rising and consultation fees stagnant, many clinics rely on medicine dispensing revenue to remain affordable."

Dr Kalwinder also expressed concerns about potential increases in prescription drug sales at pharmacies and through e-commerce platforms without proper regulation.

"There is a strong likelihood of consumers opting to purchase prescription drugs from pharmacies or via online shopping.

"The sale of prescription drugs with a doctor's prescription must be strictly enforced," he said.

He urged the government to address the GP consultation fee schedule and enforce strict regulations on prescription drug sales before implementing the price display policy.

"We call on the government to reassess this policy in the interest of the people and ensure that the healthcare system remains fair, sustainable and patient-centred," he added.