

MMA calls for panel to oversee medicine stocks in wake of human insulin shortage

Friday, 23 Aug 2024

1:48 PM MYT



Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz. -filepic

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has expressed deep concern over the unprecedented shortage of human insulin in the country.

It also strongly recommended that the Health Ministry establish a committee to oversee the management of stocks and supply of essential medicines nationwide.

It said the shortage had led to the recent decision by the Health Minister to adjust the treatment regimen for diabetes patients.

"While we acknowledge the ministry's efforts to address this crisis through emergency measures, we are gravely worried about the potential impact on patient outcomes, particularly for those who rely on human insulin for diabetes management," MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in a statement on Friday (Aug 23).

She said the decision to switch patients from human insulin to more expensive alternatives such as SGLT2 inhibitors and insulin analogues raised significant concerns.

"While these alternatives may be effective for some, the sudden transition driven by necessity rather than clinical preference may pose risks, especially if patients are not adequately monitored or if they do not respond well to the new treatments.

"We are particularly concerned about patient safety and treatment efficacy, the potential for worsening health outcomes, and supply chain stability," she added.

The MMA called for transparency and open communication with the public and healthcare providers as the situation develops.

On Thursday (Aug 22), a Health Ministry statement said the supply disruption for human insulin was due to production issues on a local supplier's side.

"For the long and medium term, the ministry is confident that the supplies of insulin will be at optimum levels.

"Efforts are underway to diversify supplies of insulin to ensure there are enough supplies in the future.

"Local manufacturers and overseas suppliers who are interested in registering their insulin products with the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency (NPRA) will be given priority in their evaluation process," it said.