



MMA backs council's halt on virtual MCs, says physical checks remain vital for patient safety



The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has raised concerns that telehealth services are becoming increasingly shaped by corporate priorities rather than proper medical judgement, warning that this shift could compromise patient safety. – Pixabay pic, November 23, 2025

The medical association reminds doctors to follow proper standards as telehealth continues to grow

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KUALA LUMPUR — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has raised concerns that telehealth services are becoming increasingly shaped by corporate priorities rather than proper medical judgement, warning that this shift could compromise patient safety.

Its president, Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo, said so in backing the Malaysian Medical Council's (MMC) recent decision to stop doctors from issuing medical certificates (MCs) through virtual consultations as a necessary step to keep clinical standards in check.

Speaking to Bernama, Thirunavukarasu said some digital health platforms, insurers and employers now influence how doctors make decisions, often pushing them to work faster or cut costs. He stressed that these pressures must never interfere with a doctor's responsibility to assess patients carefully and act in their best interest.

"The professional accountability always rests with the doctor. The patient-doctor relationship and its duty of care are still protected by law. Registered Medical Practitioners (RMPs) must use independent judgement and keep proper records, especially for teleconsultations or insurer-linked care," he said.

"The professional accountability remains squarely with the doctor, regardless of who employs or engages them."

The MMC recently ruled that MCs cannot be issued solely after virtual consultations, warning that non-compliance could lead to disciplinary action. Under Section 29 of the Medical Act 1971, penalties for infamous conduct range from suspension to removal from the medical register.

Thirunavukarasu said infamous conduct includes gross negligence, unethical practices, allowing non-clinical interference in medical decisions or failing to prioritise patient interest.

Meanwhile, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) medical ethics lecturer Dr Muhamad Zaid Muuti said MMC's restriction is appropriate because physical examination is a mandatory requirement under MMC guidelines. He noted that teleconsultation remains suitable for advice, early treatment, follow-up care and chronic disease management.

Patients who cannot travel may still request house calls, he said, adding that most clinics now have ICT tools to support teleconsultations even though MCs require in-person assessment.

"This policy does not prevent patients living far from obtaining treatment as they may still receive teleconsultations for advice, early treatment, follow-up and certain prescriptions."

"This policy only limits the issuance of MCs. Teleconsultation continues to be an essential part of modern healthcare services," he said. — November 23, 2025