

Malaysian Medical Association concerned with shortage of human insulin in the country

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MMA urges the MOH to expedite the identification of alternative manufacturers and to work towards ensuring that such shortages do not recur in the future. — AFP file photo

KUCHING (Aug 24): The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) expresses deep concern over the unprecedented shortage of human insulin in the country, which has led to the recent decision by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to adjust the treatment regimens for diabetes patients.

“While we acknowledge the MOH’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 their diabetes management,” said MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz in a press statement yesterday.

The MMA urges the MOH to expedite the identification of alternative manufacturers and to work towards ensuring that such shortages do not recur in the future.

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

“We strongly recommend that the MOH establish a nationwide committee to oversee the management of stock and supply of essential medicines,” she said.

The decision to switch from human insulin to more expensive alternatives, such as SGLT2 inhibitors and insulin analogues, raises several significant concerns, she argued.

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, she said.

She stressed that the MMA is particularly concerned about patient safety and treatment efficacy.

The shift to alternative treatments, while unavoidable given the circumstances, must be carried out with extreme caution, she said.

Patients with complex health conditions, including those with Type 1 diabetes, pregnant women, and those with serious kidney failure, are particularly vulnerable.

Any changes to their treatment regimen must be closely monitored to ensure that their health does not deteriorate, she added.

Another area of concern is the potential for worsening health outcomes.

“The criteria for switching from human insulin to alternative treatments must be carefully adhered to, but we stress that these should not replace the individualised care that each patient deserves.

“The risk of worsening glycaemic control and the potential for increased complications must be mitigated through rigorous follow-up and patient education,” she said.

Finally, MMA is concerned about supply chain stability.

The current crisis underscores the need for a more robust and diversified supply chain for essential medications like insulin, Dr Azizan added.