

7. Position Papers  
Women's Health Committee

I. 'Assisted Reproduction'

The Women's Health Committee has only discussed Women's Reproductive Rights i.e. reproductive rights embraces certain human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human right documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest not on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly;

'Assisted Reproduction' has not been placed as a priority issue in Malaysia as Women's Reproductive Rights have not been clearly defined in Malaysian Culture and Practice.

As such, I can only give my personal views being a gynaecologists.

As 'assisted reproduction' are offered to subfertile couples in the Ministry of Health hospitals, private clinics and hospitals, the medical fraternity should ensure that ethical issues and standards of management in assisted reproduction should be based on sound principles to ensure legality safety and affordable costs.

I would like to suggest that institutions providing assisted reproductive services should show a specific practice guidelines particularly in the treatment regimes given to subfertile patients. These management guidelines should be studied and suitably endorsed by an 'Expert Committee on Practice in Assisted Reproduction'. The committee should consist of members of the Malaysian Medical Council, the Ministry of Health, the MMA and the Private Hospital Association forming a Professional Advisory Committee.

In the practice/management guidelines, a decision on criteria as to which couples would require 'assisted reproduction' facility, the ethics involved in preserving/freezing sperms/oval/embryos, the number of embryos to be implanted in GIFT/ZIFT procedures and the issues of surrogacy can be formulated.

Simultaneously, supporting laboratory services involved in investigations and maintenance of eggs and embryos should have the professional standard of quality monitored. A private local or overseas laboratory services can be negotiated by the management but qualified staff must be responsible for the results produced.

II. Women's Health

On 15/6/97, at the MMA Seminar on Women's Health, the following views were discussed and highlighted.

The MMA should play an advocacy role in promoting women's health issues including allocation of research funds for qualitative surveys on women's health.  
Objective and Priorities:

Concern was raised in obtaining baseline data on women's health in Malaysia and the inability of the medical and health professional to affect change in the target population.

### III. Developing an MMA Health Agenda for women's' health databases

The MMA central committee on Women's Health should with invited members of the NGOs and MHO together identify data needed for gender-sensitive women's health programs, develop data collection procedure, as well as set indicators and service guideline criteria that can be given to all state MMA committee to work on long term. These data can used for future research and evaluation.

Priority areas are:-

- i) Violence against women namely domestic, rape and sexual assaults.
- ii) Adolescent health issues related to sexuality among female adolescents.
- iii) Health screening for women
- iv) Providing practice on service guidelines to MMA members to help promote women centred and gender sensitive issues related to women's health eg. nutrition work. These issues need to be carried at multi-levels, both in the community and provider levels.

#### a) For clinic based practice:

Pilot projects involving MMA members in handling women's health problems will be conducted as models for community based women's health programme. As women come from different backgrounds, these pilot projects will be conducted in 2 communities ie. rural and urban since the issues and challenges in program interventions may differ.

#### b) For community based programmes:

The two communities identified:

#### a) Rural women

The Kelantan MMA state committee will be integrating community-based development programs in Kelantan. The state MMA committee will work with the state Family Planning Association and Dr. Rashidah Shuib (USM, Kubang Kerian) to integrate women's' health intervention program into existing community-based programs for rural women. Such a seminar was conducted by the FPA, Kelantan on 19 September 1997

entitled "AIDS/HIV" and Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir was the guest speaker.

b) For urban women

The Negri Sembilan MMA will with cooperation from state officers from the Ministry of Health and ARROW develop an intervention program to promote women's' health in Seremban.

These pilot projects should identify community data sources, key individuals and organisation that they should work with.