

# **Malaysian Medical Association pushes for greater GP involvement, funding to address NCD**

BY CHURCHILL EDWARD ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2024, FRIDAY AT 7:01 AM [SARAWAK](#)

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*Dr Kalwinder Singh says said public-private collaboration with the wide distribution of private GPs can significantly improve effectiveness in the management of NCDs. —  
AFP pic*

KUCHING (Sept 27): The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is hoping to see an increase in public-private collaborations, particularly in the prevention and management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Its president Dato Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said public-private collaboration with the wide distribution of private general practitioners (GPs) can significantly improve effectiveness in the management of NCDs.

However, the quantum allocated for this purpose must be sufficient to allow GPs to manage cases dependent on evidence-based medicine, he stressed.

The types of medicines and treatments should not be restricted to a given list and limited budget as all patients deserve the best care, he pointed out when expressing MMA's wish list for the national budget 2025 via a press statement yesterday.

According to the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2023, over half a million or 2.5 per cent of Malaysian adults live with four NCDs: Diabetes, Hypertension, High Cholesterol and Obesity, and almost 2.3 million Malaysian adults live with three NCDs.

The 13,000 private GPs who play an important role in prevention and health education are still under-utilised in addressing NCDs, Dr Kalwinder disclosed.

He suggested that tax rebates should be given for upscaling knowledge.

"With healthcare and technology improving at a much more rapid pace than ever before, specialists and GPs (including those in public service) have to continually attend courses to update themselves on the most up to date evidence-based approaches in healthcare.

"To support this professional development especially for the improvement in primary care services, tax rebates should be given to the doctors participating and attending courses or conferences organised by professional bodies," he said.

"As for the public, to address the worrying rise in cases of NCDs, better tax incentives should be provided to encourage more Malaysians to adopt a healthy lifestyle," he added.

Tax rebates for gym memberships, rental of sports facilities, purchase of sports equipment including smart watches to monitor health parameters should be looked into, he suggested.

Corporate organisations, he added, should also be given tax incentives for promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports and recreational activities such as sports clubs, sponsorship of sports events and in-house (office) gymnasiums.

The MMA is also looking forward to the new Sugar-Sweetened Beverage (SSB) tax to be introduced in the Budget 2025.

"We fully support this initiative as part of the MoH's 'War on Sugar' and look forward to further details. Along with this initiative, we would like to see tax revenue from the sale of tobacco and alcohol products channelled to the health budget specifically for programmes to prevent and treat NCDs at public healthcare facilities," Dr Kalwinder said.

He added that as part of holistic management of NCDs, programmes are needed to educate the public on the importance of embracing a healthy lifestyle.

“We hope to see allocations for this vital area in prevention with more effective awareness campaigns.”

He said the increasing reports on cases of cardiac arrest in the population is also a concern that needs to be addressed with improved availability and access to Automated External Defibrillator (AED) machines.

He then proposed that a budget be set aside to purchase AED machines for all government offices and public places.

“Corporate organisations and privately owned gymnasiums as well as sports centres should be given tax relief for purchasing this life-saving equipment.”

Companies investing in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training for their employees should also be given tax relief, he said.

The MMA had also proposed an online dashboard listing the services, number of appointments available; to guide and assist the public in planning their visits to a public healthcare facility, Dr Kalwinder added.