

MMA: ‘Dr’ title must not mislead public on medical practice

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Malaysian Medical Association clarifies use of ‘Dr’ title, warns unregistered graduates risk misleading public

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has issued a strong statement cautioning medical graduates and the public about the potential misuse of the “Dr.” title, emphasising that academic credentials alone do not authorise individuals to practice medicine in Malaysia.

In a recent press statement, MMA President Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo, the professional body responded to growing public interest following a recent statement by the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) on the use of medical titles.

Under Section 33 of the Medical Act 1971, it is an offense for anyone not registered or exempted under the Act to use names, titles, or descriptions that could mislead the public into believing they are qualified or authorized to practice medicine or surgery.

“While the academic title ‘Dr.’ may be used by individuals who have completed a medical degree, it is important to emphasise that this does not confer on them the right to practice medicine or imply that they are registered with the MMC,” Dr Thirunavukarasu stated.

The MMA clarified that the issue centers not on the title itself, but on the context in which it is used. When unregistered doctors use the “Dr.” title in medical or health-related settings—whether physically or virtually—particularly when providing health communications,

advisories, endorsements, or treatment, there is significant risk of public deception.

“There is a real risk of the public being misled into believing that these doctors are legally registered, and it is important to note that their unlawful actions can potentially lead to harm to the public,” the statement emphasised.

The association expressed particular concern about the proliferation of health information on social media platforms, noting that proper registration verification is more critical than ever.

“In an era where health information is widely shared on social media, it is more important than ever to ensure that only those properly registered and qualified are seen to speak or act in a medical capacity on healthcare-related issues,” Dr Thirunavukarasu said.

The MMA strongly urged the public to verify practitioners through the MMC’s website to check if a doctor is registered and licensed to practice in Malaysia. The association also encouraged reporting of individuals rendering healthcare opinions, advisories, and services without proper registration and licensing.

The statement called on multiple parties to exercise greater responsibility: “We urge all parties—including medical graduates, media practitioners, product promoters, and digital

content creators—to exercise responsibility, transparency, and ethical judgment when using professional titles in health contexts.”

While acknowledging the MMC’s role as the statutory regulatory body for medical practice in Malaysia, the MMA stated it believes it is important to offer clarity on the issue from a professional and ethical standpoint.

“MMA remains deeply concerned about any misuse of medical titles or qualifications that may undermine public trust or compromise patient safety,” the statement read.

The association committed to continuing collaboration with all stakeholders, including the MMC, to uphold professional integrity and protect public confidence in the medical system.