

MMA raises alarm over corporate interference in medical decisions

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Oct 9, 2025 @ 7:45pm



NEW
STRAITS TIMES

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has expressed concern over the growing influence of corporate entities and third-party administrators (TPAs) in making decisions that interfere with doctors' clinical judgment and compromise patient safety.

MMA president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo said the association had recently observed a troubling pattern in the healthcare system.

This include cases of a bank directing the use of only generic drugs, a doctor issuing anaesthesia instructions through non-clinical channels, and a collaboration between an insurance company and a pharmacy chain offering 24 hours telehealth services with "instant" prescriptions through a mobile app.

"This is not the first such collaboration. We understand a TPA is involved in managing these services, and similar arrangements have occurred before," he said in a statement today.

He said that while teleconsultation plays an important role in improving access to care, it becomes dangerous when driven by commercial motives instead of clinical judgment.

"When healthcare is guided by contracts and cost-control objectives rather than patient safety, it turns from innovation into a threat.

"The recent announcement of round-the-clock teleconsultations and digital prescriptions under a TPA-managed scheme raises serious questions about who ensures accountability, continuity of care, and adherence to professional standards," he said.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said MMA's concern lies not with technology itself, but with the lack of regulatory enforcement and the growing commercialisation of medical practice.

He said while the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) has clear ethical guidelines on telemedicine, enforcement remains complaint-driven — meaning action is only taken when a patient complains.

"This creates an environment where doctors may unknowingly or willingly compromise their duty of care under corporate pressure.

"Some even provide clinical directives or prescriptions on platforms that do not ensure proper assessment or follow-up," he said.

He reminded doctors that the same ethical and legal responsibilities apply whether consultations occur online or face-to-face.

"Convenience and cost savings can never justify cutting corners in patient care," he said.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said corporate organisations and TPAs dictating medical treatment and procedures threaten the very foundation of the healthcare system.

"When business decisions start replacing medical judgment, patient welfare is at risk.

"We urge the Health Ministry and MMC to take a proactive approach in closing regulatory loopholes and strengthening oversight mechanisms to protect patients and ensure accountability," he said.

He added that while MMA supports digital innovation in healthcare, it must always serve patients, not profits.

"True value-based care means putting patient outcomes, safety, and trust first. When patient welfare takes a back seat to commercial interests, the cost to society will be far greater than any savings claimed," he said.