



President's Message

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On 18 Sept 2023, I was invited by Ms Shanti Abraham (President of the Medico-legal Society of Malaysia), to deliver a keynote address with the topic “Perspectives of Medical Practice – Past, Present and Future, and A Renewed Call To Action”.

It was well attended by doctors, lawyers, and Ministry of Health officers. The event was officiated by the honourable Mr Ramkarpal Singh who is the Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform).

I started off with the definition of the medical practice. It refers to the work that doctors and other health professionals do to diagnose, treat, and prevent illness and injuries in patients. It also encompasses a wide range of activities including:

- Patient examination and assessment
- Ordering and interpreting medical tests and investigations
- Prescribing medications and treatment plans
- Performing medical procedures and surgeries
- Providing counselling and patient education on Health matters
- Collaborating with other healthcare professionals in multidisciplinary teams
- Monitoring and managing chronic medical conditions
- Conducting research and staying up-to-date with medical advancements
- Adhering to medical ethics and legal requirements in patient care



Ms Shanti Abraham presenting a souvenir to the speaker

Medical Practice can take place in various settings such as hospitals, clinics, private offices and more.

It is governed by standards and regulations to ensure the Safety and well-being of patients such as under the governance of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 (PHFSA 1998) and the Malaysian Medical Council.

The PHFSA 1998 was enacted to provide regulation and oversight of private healthcare facilities and services in the country to ensure that these facilities and services operate at a standard that guarantees the safety and welfare of the public.

The MMC is the official statutory body responsible for the regulation and oversight of medical practitioners in Malaysia. The MMC plays a vital role in ensuring that the highest standards of Medical Ethics and Practice are upheld among professionals in the country.

- I) Some of the major differences between medical practice in the 80's, 90's and leading to the current time:
 1. Technological advancements have revolutionized medical practice over the years. These innovations not only improve the quality of care but also increase the speed and accuracy of diagnoses and treatments.
 2. Healthcare Infrastructure – refers to the foundational physical and organisational structures, facilities and resources needed for the effective delivery of healthcare services.
 3. Medical education and training
 4. Specialisation and sub-specialisation
 5. Healthcare policies
 7. Access to information
 7. Patient care approach – Landmark case
 Foo Fio Na v. Dr Soo Fook Mun and Anor-2007 is pivotal in the realm of Malaysian medical negligence law as it shifts away from the Bolam Principle, emphasising the importance of patient autonomy and the right to make informed decisions about their own healthcare.
- II) Prevalence of medical litigation cases in the 1980's, 1990's and leading to the current time
 During the 1980s and 1990s, medical litigation cases were not as prevalent as recent times. The healthcare system was still developing and legal awareness regarding medical malpractice was not as widespread.
 The increase can be attributed to several factors:
 - Awareness and education
 - Medical advancements



Deputy Minister, Mr Ramkarpal Singh, Ms Shanti Abraham and myself

- Higher expectations
- Legal infrastructure

Presently, there has been a rise in the number of negligence claims and the size of the awards from 2010 onwards.

- III) Some strategies that can help reduce the risk of medical litigation include:
 - Effective communication
 - Informed consent
 - Patient-centred care
 - Competence and continuing education
 - Thorough documentation
 - Ethical practice
 - Risk management programmes
 - Team collaboration
 - Managing expectations
 - Apologising and learning from mistakes

With all the advancements in technology, nothing beats humanity in healthcare!

This refers to the compassionate, empathetic, and humane treatment of patients. It also emphasises the importance of recognising each patient as a unique individual with their own emotions, experiences, and needs, rather than just a case or a diagnosis.

Humanity in healthcare underscores the intrinsic value of every person and the need to treat them with dignity, respect and kindness. **BMMA**