

Dr Lee: Fadillah is right about unhealthy lifestyles

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Former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye and the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) have voiced their support for comments made by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof on the consequences of leading unhealthy lifestyles. - File pic, for illustration purposes

PETALING JAYA: Former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye and the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) have voiced their support for comments made by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof on the consequences of leading unhealthy lifestyles.

"I do not think that Fadillah's statement is wrong. He is just trying to highlight the fact that Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are lifestyle-related," said Dr Lee.

Recently, Fadillah had addressed the Dewan Rakyat regarding the issue of public hospitals being congested because of the quality of healthcare services provided which were at almost no cost.

He also pointed out that unhealthy lifestyles were leading to people having to seek medical attention.

A report by the World Health Organisation (WHO) last year revealed that NCDs were the main cause of death and disability in Malaysia and that the continued prevalence of NCDs was increasing the strain on the public health system.

Dr Lee said that although the government had taken the initiative to extend the operating hours of government clinics and outsourced healthcare services to private hospitals, there was more that could be done.

"I would recommend online consultations for patients who are suffering from minor illnesses," he said, adding that such patients could then get a prescription to purchase the necessary medication from pharmacies.



Former deputy health minister Dr Lee Boon Chye and the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) pointed out that unhealthy lifestyles were leading to people having to seek medical attention. - NSTP/MIKAIL ONG.

MMA president, Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai, stressed that there was an inherent need for more education on the importance of leading healthy lifestyles for disease prevention.

He said that congestion at public healthcare facilities was due to the quality and low cost of treatment, coupled with staff shortages and a growing population.

"When healthcare is heavily subsidised, people will take things rather lightly and there will be a tendency of not truly appreciating the public healthcare system," he told local news portal Free Malaysia Today (FMT).

Muruga shared that MMA concurred with the government's approach in working together with the private sector, including General Practitioner clinics (GPs).

"Likewise, the management of NCD cases should also be referred to private GPs as many patients waiting for long hours on end at public hospitals and clinics are NCD patients who go for their follow-ups," he said.

Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Azrul Khalib, said Fadillah had shed light on an important point, on how the majority of the population depended heavily on the public healthcare system.

"This involves more than 70 per cent of the population," he said.

He said Fadillah also highlighted the importance of doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals in making the delivery of essential health services possible.

However, Azrul believes that the cost of public healthcare services is not low and actually similar to those in the private sector.

"But as almost 98 per cent of healthcare costs are subsidised by taxpayers or public funds, it seems that public healthcare is free or rather inexpensive," he said.

"This is a misconception, and legislators must be reminded that current healthcare financing in Malaysia is not sustainable and needs reform," he said.