Malaysian Medical Association urges Health Ministry to take action against middlemen unlawfully pushing Covid-19 screening

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BY YISWAREE PALANSAMY

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The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said the Health Ministry must act against third-parties openly advertising Covid-19 screening in violation of legal restrictions against such promotions. — Reuters pic

KUALA LUMPUR, June 14 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) said the Health Ministry must act against third-parties openly advertising Covid-19 screening in violation of legal restrictions against such promotions.

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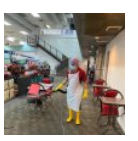

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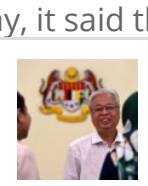

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MMA president Dr N. Ganabaskaran lamented the lack of action despite the blatant violation of laws barring such advertising.

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"MMA has observed that of late, 'middlemen' unrelated to the healthcare sector are taking advantage of the Covid-19 situation with the commercialising of Covid-19 screening.

"The screenings are openly advertised online and we do not see any action being taken by the authorities. Previous reports made on certain screenings that were done without observing proper protocols have fallen on deaf ears.

"There are existing laws to control and regulate medical screenings for infectious diseases, but what is the point of having these laws if they are not being enforced?" Dr Ganabaskaran said.

He said that it was shocking as to how the advertising of some of the commercialised screenings has been allowed without proper protocols in screening being followed.

He expressed concern that the majority of the public who are unfamiliar with stringent protocols, would be more attracted to the lower pricing without being aware of any compromises in the quality of care.

Dr Ganabaskaran added that the Covid-19 crisis should not be seen as an opportunity to make money or increase revenue profile while compromising on patient safety and quality in services provided.

"Healthcare should not be treated as a commodity, where the focus is on bottom line profits.

"There were also reports that pooling of samples was being done while conducting RT-PCR tests by providers who may be price undercutting while compromising on the quality in conducting these tests. Since the sampling method for RT-PCR and Antigen Rapid Test Kits (a cheaper alternative) are the same, are the "Gold Standard" RT-PCR tests actually being done? And who conducts an audit on these tests?" he questioned.

He urged MOH to make public, all of the ministry's audits on laboratories and on how the tests are being conducted, adding that the Pathology Laboratory Act 2007 which was passed 13 years ago, should have been gazetted by now.

"MMA reminds all medical practitioners to maintain the highest level of ethics and professionalism in their practice as there are legal implications should there be any compromise in the quality of care," he added.

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