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LETTER | 'Dr' title must not mislead



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LETTER | The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) takes cognisance of the recent statement issued by the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) on the use of the title "Dr" by medical graduates who are not yet registered as medical practitioners.

With the increasing public interest in the issue and concerns raised both within and outside the profession on this topic, MMA, whilst acknowledging the MMC's role as the statutory regulatory body for medical practice in Malaysia, also believes it is important for MMA 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. 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.

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 practise medicine or imply that they are registered with the MMC.

The Medical Act 1971, under Section 33, makes it an offence 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 authorised to practise medicine or surgery.

In simpler terms, the issue is not the title itself, but the context in which it is used.

When the title “Dr” is used by an unregistered doctor in a medical or health-related setting both physically and virtually, especially in giving health related public communications, advisories, endorsements or in rendering treatment, 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.

As highlighted in the MMC statement, MMA strongly urges the public to avail themselves of the MMC's website to check if a doctor is registered and licensed to practise in Malaysia. It is within the public’s right to report to the relevant authorities those rendering healthcare opinions, advisories and services without being registered and licensed to practise in Malaysia.

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.

MMA will continue to work with all stakeholders, including the MMC, to uphold the integrity of the profession and ensure that public confidence in the medical system is protected.

The author is MMA president.

The views expressed here are those of the author/contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of *Malaysiakini.*