The Star

MMA warns against dangers of 'Dr' title misuse

By KHOO GEK SAN
Tuesday, 30 Dec 2025

PETALING JAYA: The use of the title "Dr" must not mislead the public into believing a person is legally qualified or authorised to practise medicine, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

Its president Datuk Dr Thirunavukarasu Rajoo said the association is concerned that the misuse of medical titles could undermine public trust and put patient safety at risk, particularly at a time when health-related information is widely shared online.

"While the academic title 'Dr' may be used by individuals who have completed a medical degree, this does not give them the right to practise medicine or mean that they are registered with the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC)," he said in a statement yesterday.

The association said it also took note of the MMC's recent clarification that not all medical graduates are allowed to practise, even if they hold a medical degree.

Dr Thirunavukarasu said that under Section 33 of the Medical Act 1971, it is an offence for anyone who is not registered or exempted to use titles or descriptions that could mislead the public into believing they are authorised to practise medicine or surgery.

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

He added that problems arise when unregistered individuals use the title "Dr" in medical or health-related settings, whether in person or online, particularly when giving health advice, endorsements or treatment.

"This creates a real risk of the public being misled into believing that these individuals are legally registered doctors. Such unlawful actions can potentially cause harm," he said.

The MMA echoed the MMC's advice for the public to verify a doctor's registration status via the council's official website.

"The public has the right to report to the relevant authorities those who provide healthcare opinions, advice or services without being registered and licensed to practise in Malaysia," said Dr Thirunavukarasu.

He also urged medical graduates, media practitioners, product promoters and digital content creators to exercise responsibility and

ethical judgement when using professional titles in health-related contexts.

“The MMA will continue to work closely with all stakeholders, including the MMC, to uphold the integrity of the profession and protect public confidence in the medical system,” he added.

The MMC has clarified that the use of the title “Dr” does not give a person the right to practise medicine in Malaysia, as this requires registration with the council and a valid Annual Practising Certificate.

MMC president Datuk Dr Mahathar Abd Wahab said individuals who have completed recognised medical degree programmes may use the title as an academic designation, but this does not mean they are registered medical practitioners.

He added that the title “Dr” is not exclusive to doctors, and is also used by dentists, veterinarians and holders of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees.