

The Star : Sick of docs who overcharge

Written by Administrator

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PUTRAJAYA: A patient who was checked on 15 times a day while he was staying at a private hospital was charged RM3,000. Another was billed RM2,000 for the 10 times he was checked on. These patients have the right to file official complaints. Ticking off private hospitals and doctors who hit patients with ever increasing fees, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said the Cabinet was concerned about these exorbitant charges on patients, including unnecessary tests.

Certain parties are trying to rake in profits by charging patients too much, he told a press conference yesterday after meeting officials of the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA). The public has a right to complain. There are guidelines for charges. Some doctors, who are famous, increase their charges to control the number of patients they see.

Dr Chua said they could complain to the MMA or the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) which has the power to take action on complaints, especially on ethical issues such as issuing warning, suspension or deregistration. He also said that charges by doctors would continue to increase because of the rising healthcare cost for medication, equipment and IT components.

It is not just to look after the sick but also a business undertaking where the profit line is important to shareholders, he said. Under the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998, he said 29 clinics had been sealed and 19 fake doctors traced.

On the extension of housemanship from one year to two years, Dr Chua said it was important for patients to get proper treatment from qualified doctors. A total of 603 housemen failed to get fully registered from the 1,200 yearly from 2001 to 2004. It was 176 in 2001, 162 in 2002, 102 in 2003, 118 in 2004 and 45 two years ago.

These figures are worrying for a developing country. It is nearly 10%. Most is for poor work performance and some of them just take unpaid leave and disappear because they say the medical profession is not suitable for them. This cannot continue, he said.

Dr Chua said senior doctors had been instructed that they must supervise and train the younger ones.