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DOCTORS NEED HIV EDUCATION, SAYS MMA

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 17 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) is concerned over the lack of knowledge amongst a large section of doctors and healthcare workers in handling patients who are HIV positive and those who have Aids.

"This is truly unfortunate as the doctors and the healthcare workers are front-line professionals whom people with HIV/Aids would come into contact in the first instance," said MMA's president Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid.

In a statement issued today, Dr Abdul Hamid said the association had recently learnt that members of the public with problems or queries on HIV/Aids had been unable to obtain useful information or help from doctors.

He said the problem was worse in the private sector and one reason given was that these doctors had little opportunity to get "educated" because of their busy and most often "singleton" medical practice.

Dr Abdul Hamid said the report that some private hospitals were sending away patients with HIV infection or Aids to government hospitals for treatment was also disturbing and seemed to be a result of the ignorance on the part of not only doctors but also the administrators of private hospitals, who obviously seemed to be condoning this course of action by their staff.

"I totally agree with Marina Mahathir, chairman of Malaysian Aids Council, that the Ministry of Health should view the attitude adopted by doctors and healthcare workers seriously and carry out country-wide education programmes on Aids," he said.

In this regard, he added, the MMA had taken steps to intensify efforts to hold systematic counselling courses and lectures on HIV/Aids for its members throughout the country, particularly targetted at private practitioners and healthcare workers in the private sectors.

Dr Abdul Hamid said MMA had also plans to organise, with the help of the Malaysian Aids Council, resource groups in cities and major towns, who could be contacted with ease and speed by doctors in busy, solo practice for referral of members of the public or HIV/Aids patients needing help and advice. -- BERNAMA

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