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Chua-Telemedicine

TELEMEDICINE, HEALTH SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO MSC

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 16 (Bernama) -- Telemedicine will enable Malaysia to overcome the problem of shortage of radiologist and oncologist, said Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng.

He said Malaysia has only 18 radiologists and oncologists, far below the 31,000 new cancer cases reported in government hospital ever year.

Telemedicine would be the health sector's contribution to the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), he said at a news conference here today, after witnessing the signing of a joint venture agreement between Gleneagles Hospital (KL) Sdn Bhd and Aus Health International Pty Ltd to jointly operate an Oncology Centre in Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre.

Chua said the telemedicine would complement the Prime Minister Datuk seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to make Kuala Lumpur and the MSC a center of excellence for Information Technology (IT).

"In this respect, we will gain a great deal because once we institute telecancer or teleoncology links and teleradiology links with New South Wales through this joint venture, we will help in some big measure to overcome the problem on the shortage of radiologists and oncologists in this country," he said.

Pictures of images from scan machine or imaging machine of the cancer patients could be sent to the radiologist and oncologist in New South Wales, where they could prescribe treatment and consultation over telemedicine.

"For cancer patients in this country, this kind of linkage would provide them access to some of the best specialists in Australia ... At lower cost, we are able to access some of the best brain in Australia," he said.

He said telemedicine would also offer a big saving as much as 30 to 40 per cent of the medical and travelling cost for cancer patients wanting to seek specialist advice overseas.

Chua said the link-up would be done through the telecommunications system in the country, which is one of the best infrastructures in the world.

"The proposal is to provide link-up with St Vincent, St Georges and Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney with the Oncology Centre here in KL," he said, adding that the link-up would be done in one year.

Oncology Centre would be a one stop centre providing services ranging from early detection, therapy, counselling and rehabilitation to conducting basic preventive programmes, education forums and workshops to cancer patients and family members.

Gleneagles Hospital's chairman Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman and Aus Health International's chairman Dr Donald James Grimes signed the agreement. --
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