

Chua: Viagra may cause rise in STD ³¹

PETALING JAYA: There is a possibility of increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) infection among the elderly with the availability of viagra pills in the market. *518-1-98*

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng who issued the warning yesterday said this possibility was taken into consideration in the ministry's study on the pills which were used to treat impotency.

Chua said if viagra was registered, the criteria to qualify for a prescription would be up to the "professional judgment" of doctors.

"It is up to doctors to prescribe in an ethical manner, he told reporters after presenting diplomas and certificates to 158 nurses from the As-

sunta Hospital's Tun Tan Cheng Lock Nursing College here yesterday.

Chua said he agreed with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who said that there might be a rise in sexual crimes by elderly men with the availability of viagra.

Chua said the ministry has not decided when viagra would be made available locally though it was now at the third phase of evaluation by specialists.

Evaluation was expected to be complete by end of the year, he said.

Chua said the ministry would set a lower selling price for viagra to make it affordable if it was approved for prescription.

On whether viagra would be available in government hospitals, too, Chua said it was yet to be decided.