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Patients, not bills, must take priority, hospitals reminded

MUAR, Sat. - Hospitals and clinics should always place the lives of patients above all else.

Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng said some medical institutions in developed countries were more concerned with getting their bills settled.

He said he hoped this would not happen in Malaysia.

"It is now common practice among hospitals in advanced countries to check if a patient has medical insurance before admitting him, however serious his condition might be.

"There is absolutely no desire to treat a patient quickly and with care," Chua said at the opening of a health and medical camp organised by the Bakri health clinic panel, near here today.

He added that patients were left unattended while the staff made checks into the validity of their medical insurance.

Chua said: "This is, however, not how things are done in Malaysia where everyone whether rich or poor is given fair, equal and quality treatment.

"A patient has only to pay RM1 for registration at government hospitals and clinics and they can get the best treatment," he said.

He said the Government subsidised 97 per cent of the fees with many patients receiving free treatment.

Chua said quality medical facilities were also available in remote villages.

He said the ministry would continue to provide better facilities to improve healthcare in the country.

He added that the World Health Organisation had presented an award to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1994 in recognition of Malaysia's commitment to its medical and health system.

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