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Mahathir-Dentists

BALANCE DEMAND OF INDIVIDUAL AND MASSES, PM TELLS DENTISTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight reminded dentists not to forget basic care for the masses in their effort to give the best service to individual patients.

"The need to do the best and the most for the patient must be tempered with concerns of providing basic care for the masses," he said when opening the 89th Federation Dentaire Internationale World Dental Congress 2001 at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil here.

He said excessive pre-occupation with individualistic care may distort beyond proportion the interest of the communities that all health professionals must exhibit.

Dentistry, like medicine, revolved around the dentist-patient relationship, and the health of individual patients was central to the ethics and practice of the oral health professional, he said.

"However, while individual needs and population needs often do converge, they are at times also divergent, individuals may demand the latest technological advances incurring costs at the highest range.

"This can become a dilemma for many health professionals in many societies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said technological innovations have also changed the nature of the dentist-patient relationship with patients now demanding information and making their own demands on care.

"They challenge the professional's credibility, his training and his beliefs...They demand the right to know," he said.

He said the days when the "professional knows best" were almost over.

"If, at an individual level, this is not handled properly, there can be erosion of public trust in the motives of the profession," he said.

The modern professionals were thus not only inundated with technology which he or she must learn to master but also swamped with change in consumer expectations that demand updates on cutting edge knowledge, Dr Mahathir said.

"Admire these challenges, the modern professional needs to fortify and consolidate the resolve to uphold ethics and professionalism," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in this day and age, technology had afforded the people an open frontier to access health knowledge.

"It is up to each profession to maximise use of these key-enablers to disseminate and share information for the continuous professional development of its members," he said.

"It is also every profession's obligation to nurture development and safeguard the credibility of the profession," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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