

12 AUG 2002

Chua-haemodialysis

ALL GOV'T HOSPITALS EVENTUALLY TO HAVE HAEMODIALYSIS CENTRES

TELUK INTAN, Aug 12 (Bernama) -- Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng today said all 121 government hospitals in the country would eventually have haemodialysis centres by the year 2007.

He said such facilities were being provided in 50 government hospitals with another 12 hospitals by end of the year.

"Although the plan looks ambitious, the ministry would push for it as would benefit patients, especially the poor and those in the rural areas who cannot afford to go to private hospitals," he told reporters after visiting the Teluk Intan Hospital here.

Chua said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was very concerned with the plight of kidney patients and had asked the ministry to ensure they would get proper treatment and at a very minimal cost.

"We are sure that the Treasury will make available the necessary allocation to enable us to expand the facilities. But it's more than just money and equipment as we also need to train personnel such as doctors, nurses and technical staff," he said.

There are about 10,000 kidney patients in the country with about 2,300 new cases detected every year.

Chua said a single treatment at a private hospital could cost a patient RM200 and he had to fork out at least RM2,400 per month compared to only RM15 per visit in a government hospital where the service was also given free of charge to the poor.

He said non governmental organisations (NGOs) had also set up about 50 such centres nationwide but it was not enough.

Furthermore, alternative treatment like Continuous Abdominal Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD) is not available for everyone as it is costly, he said.

In Perak, Chua said haemodialysis units are available at the Ipoh, Slim River, Taiping and Teluk Intan hospitals while Seri Manjong and Gerik hospitals joining the list at the end of the year.

"Ipoh will have one more unit and for the remaining eight hospitals in Perak, I have asked the State Health Director to come out with a priority list...hopefully we can have such centres in these hospitals in three or four years' time," he said.

Chua also said that the ministry had offered the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) the use of 15-year-old Teluk Intan and the newly-opened Slim River hospitals as the university's satellite hospitals.

If the UKM and its medical faculty agreed to the proposal, they could send their students for clinical training at the two hospitals, he said.

"This will benefit the students and also the patients as specialists from UKM and its medical faculty will visit the hospitals which lack specialists now," he said.

Chua also said the ministry had allocated RM10 million to build a health clinic here and it would be equipped with an outpatient centre, pharmacy, lab and x-ray facilities.

In addition, he said the existing hospital would be upgraded to provide a maternity ward and an operating theatre.

-- BERNAMA

AR ABG