

Health DG insists Covid-19 home treatment just a 'consideration'

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Health Ministry director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah insisted that they are still only considering the option of home treatment for Covid-19 patients under the “right criteria”.

This is despite Sabah Local Government and Housing Minister Masidi Manjun confirming that arrangements have been made for some Covid-19 patients in the state to receive treatment at home.

“That is one of our mitigation categories for if we need the beds. If the criteria are right, we can consider home treatment for the patients.

“That is one option we are looking at but now we are saying that the capacity is still there for our quarantine and treatment centres for low-risk Covid-19 patients. It is only at 30 percent usage.

“We are discussing this option,” Noor Hisham said in his press conference at the

Health Ministry in Putrajaya today.

He was pressed about Masidi, who had said on Oct 22 that patients in Sabah are normally advised to stay at home for their treatment if their symptoms are still manageable.

When asked about this, Noor Hisham referred to individuals who were awaiting their Covid-19 test results during the initial “backlog” in terms of getting their results.

He said those awaiting the results to come out within three to five days were advised to take “treatment at home” and not to expose themselves until they receive the results.

“Once the results are back, only then we bring them to the hospital,” said Noor Hisham.

Yesterday, Masidi stood by his statement on “early stages” patient receiving home treatment, saying that the patients are being treated accordingly at home.

“According to our records, they have been allowed to stay at home for treatment. They are being treated accordingly.

“Of course, some of them may expect immediate (treatment) but due to the rather delicate situation we are in where everybody is pushed to the limit, there may be cases where a delay might have occurred in the treatment of these patients,” he had said.

Also in the press conference today, Noor Hisham responded with a three-pronged strategy to a question on the preparedness of Sabah to handle the rise in Covid-19 cases there.

He said the first strategy is to place Level Three Covid-19 patients with lesser risk at the quarantine and treatment centres for low-risk patients instead of at the hospitals.

Lesser risk, in this case, referred to those below 60 years old with no co-morbidities.

The second strategy is to set up additional hospitals, such as the field hospital near Tawau Hospital with a 100-bed capacity for non-Covid patients to free up space within the hospital for Covid-19 patients, he said.

The third strategy, he said, is to consider the option of home quarantine for asymptomatic Covid-19 cases.

“But we have to see if they have space and the suitability, then only we can consider this. If it is not suitable, then we cannot.

“But so far, we still have the capacity,” said Noor Hisham.

Masidi was also reported saying yesterday that hospital beds in Sabah are almost fully occupied, with 99.5 percent filled.

However, Noor Hisham today said that only 70 percent of hospital beds in Sabah are filled.

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