

1Care scheme link with EPF proposal being studied
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The health ministry is looking into aligning its proposed '1Care for 1Malaysia' health financing scheme with the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) which recently permitted withdrawals for more critical illnesses.

Health director-general Dr Mohd Ismail Merican said the ministry had held a briefing session with EPF on the 1Care scheme and more consultations would follow.

"It is envisaged that once implemented, efforts by the EPF to provide funding for health services will also align to the 1Care policy," he told Bernama.

The EPF announced this week that it had expanded the scope of withdrawals for critical illnesses from 13 to 36, and also for treatment of family members under the age of 16 for severe asthma, leukaemia and intellectual impairment caused by sickness or accidents.

Ismail said the EPF move was "a useful interim measure" to give the public more choice to seek treatment, particularly in the private sector, and to cover more catastrophic illnesses.

"The ministry understands EPF savings and medical savings will be inadequate to provide the needed risk protection against large financial shocks when faced with catastrophic illnesses," he said.

In light of the rising cost of health care, he said the ministry was taking steps to work together with private health providers to look at medical charges in the country.

Mohd Ismail added that the ministry and the government were in the process of developing a comprehensive plan for health system transformation which would upgrade the health care system to meet the needs of the population, now and in the future, as Malaysia strived to become a high income nation.

He said 1Care, which was still under discussion, would be an integrated public-private sector health care system, starting at the primary level.

It would also address the efficiency of resource use and payment mechanisms to health providers.

Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai said last month that the ministry and the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) would work out the mechanism which would address the distribution of doctors and health clinics in Sabah and Sarawak.

"The 1Care system can address the shortage of doctors in a lot of areas and improve service," he had said at a dinner, in conjunction with the MMA's 50th annual general meeting in Melaka on May 28.

- Bernama

