

Malpractices alleged at 1Malaysia clinics
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A medical practitioner has criticised newly formed 1Malaysia clinics set up by the Ministry of Health for providing poor quality of medical services to patients, which include wrong prescription of medicines and wrong diagnoses.

Dr T Jayabalan, who represents workers and the Malaysian Trade Union Council, claimed that a recent study he conducted in Kampar, Perak revealed that medical assistants in government clinics have been issuing wrong prescriptions to patients.

NONEHe cautioned that the clinics, brainchild of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (right) which aimed to provide access to healthcare for all Malaysians nationwide, may also be affected by these malpractices as all of them are manned by medical assistants and nurses.

"This seems to be common practice among medical assistants. They are giving out prescriptions for the wrong medicines, or prescribing medicines which they are not allowed to prescribe. They have also been found to have wrongfully diagnosed patients," said Jayabalan, who is also health adviser to the Consumers Association of Penang.

Though he called setting up the clinics "laudable", he said that the public now want quality instead of just 'good' access to healthcare.

Jayabalan made these claims at a talk titled 'What is wrong with our health care system?' on Saturday at the Caring Society Complex in Penang.

The event was organised by Sembang-Sembang Forum, a group of Penangites concerned with social and civil issues affecting their daily lives. Former Gerakan assemblyman for Machang Bubok Toh Kin Woon moderated the event.

Jayabalan also said he was appalled that the 44 clinics, launched in January, targeting the urban poor, and charging merely RM1 for its facilities, were not set up in a transparent manner as doctors were caught unawares by the project.

Currently, there are 10 1Malaysia clinics in the Klang Valley, five each in Penang and Johor, four each in Perak, Sabah and Sarawak, two in Kedah, one in Perlis and three each in the rest of the states.

Questionable staffing of clinics

His statement is supported by Malaysian Medical Association president (2009-2011) Dr David KL Quek in January who said that "while the MMA supports better, affordable and more accessible healthcare facilities to the public, the manner in which this has been announced, where they are to be sited, as well as the fact that these clinics were to be manned by medical assistants and nurses, took many doctors by surprise".

healthcare reform um forum 121205 dr jeyakumar devarajMeanwhile, Dr Jeyakumar Devaraj (right), Parti Sosialis Malaysia Sungai Siput parliamentarian, lamented the acute shortage of medical staff, especially specialists, to attend to the needs of rising number of patients.

He said that in April last year, the Ministry of Health has approved licenses to establish 45 new private hospitals in the country.

Health Minister Liow Tiong Lai has disclosed that since the implementation of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 and its regulations in 2006, the ministry has received 55 applications for the establishment of new private hospitals, of which 45 have been approved.

Jeyakumar brought up concerns that for each private hospital set up, about 10 senior medical experts would be 'pinched' from public hospitals.

"This will severely affect the standard of service provided at the government hospitals especially at a time when there is already a severe shortage of doctors to serve in the public sector," he added.

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