

**MMA: Putrajaya gambling with nation's health by liberalising medical sector**  
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**By Debra Chong**

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 7 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) today questioned Putrajaya's haste to open up the healthcare sector before setting up proper checks.

In an immediate response to the Budget 2012 announcement this afternoon, the MMA warned the government was taking a huge gamble with public healthcare as liberalising the sector could also see unqualified doctors treat patients.

MMA president Dr Mary Cardoso (picture) said the government must strengthen its enforcement capacities as well in order to ensure that whatever rules are in place, e.g. requirements for registration of a foreign specialist, are complied with before opening up the medical sector.

She said such a move was unnecessary and would result in unfair competition for Malaysian doctors.

"There must be full reciprocity between countries that we open up in equity and practising rights for our specialists," she told The Malaysian Insider.

"We cannot liberalise our health services sector without these mechanisms for check and balance in place," she said in her emailed statement.

Dr Cardoso stressed there was no need to rush into opening up the medical sector as it was not yet ready.

She said the MMA has suggested many ideas to the government, such as revising the medical law to include a specialist register, but pointed out they have yet to be implemented.

She also cautioned the government against setting up another 50 1 Malaysia clinics unless they were located in the rural areas, especially Sabah and Sarawak.

She said while the proposal itself was noble, she observed most of the existing 1 Malaysia clinics were based in urban centres that already have many qualified doctors.

Putting more in the cities and towns would raise competition among GPs who are already suffering with loss of patients and income, she added.

"We must not confuse the 1 Malaysia clinics with rural health services," said Dr Cardoso.

"With the rapidly increasing numbers of young doctors in Malaysia, the setting up of more 1 Malaysia clinics is going to worsen the situation and we will soon see unemployed doctors," she said.

The MMA president said the medical association has proposed the Ministry of Health (MOH)

identify and register GPs in the urban poor areas who are willing to participate in scheme so the doctors can treat patients where needed.

"The patients can still pay RM1 (the same as they pay at the 1 Malaysia clinic) but the doctors will get reimbursed by the MOH," she said.

"This is a win-win situation because the patients get better care (by doctors, not by paramedics), and the doctors get more business," she added.

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