

Group claims GPs will need 'double-licensing' under 1 Care
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PETALING JAYA, Feb 12 — The proposed 1 Care health scheme will require all general practitioners to submit to additional accreditation before they are allowed to treat patients, a citizens' group asserted today.

The Citizens' Healthcare Coalition (CHC) claimed that all current general practitioners would be screened via special authority called the National Health Financing Authority (NHFA), and that the new accreditation would have to go through the Malaysian Society for Quality Health (MSQH).

"GPs have to accredited to be become a gatekeeper. Anyone who wants to be in the primary healthcare system, the criteria is that they be accredited.

"It's double licensing," CHC spokesman Dr T. Jayabalan told reporters at the sidelines of a 1 Care forum today.

He also claimed that each general practitioner would have to come up with RM10,000 to pay for the certificate of accreditation.

Jayabalan was one of three speakers at forum on the proposed 1 Care organised by CHC. Also speaking were Dr Ng Swee Choon of the Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Association of Malaysia (FPMPAM) and Selangor executive councillor Dr Xavier Jeyakumar.

Earlier, Jayabalan told the 600-odd attendees that the 1 Care healthcare plan would also require a Pharmaceutical Bill to be passed in Parliament later this year.

According to him, the bill would see an enforced separation between the "dispensing and prescribing" of medicine, whereby doctors would only be allowed to prescribe medicine while pharmacists would be given full responsibility in dispensing medication.

"In emergency cases, doctors would [still] be allowed to give medication but [only] a capped portion," he said.

When asked by reporters to identify the source of his information, Jayabalan said it was gleaned from doctors who were part of the working committee groups on 1 Care. He later admitted he was not part of the working committee.

A Health Ministry official was invited to take part in the forum but did not show up. Organisers later told reporters the official had declined the invitation.

Public dissatisfaction was evident during the event, with many in attendance visibly upset when they found that no one from the Health Ministry would be appearing.

Many also said they were still clueless about 1 Care, and complained that the government did not give them a chance to understand it.

"There must be due process of engagement; it must be transparent," said Dr P. Subramaniam, an executive committee member of the rights watchdog Aliran, during a question-and-answer session.

1 Care has come under fire from healthcare practitioners and the public, who claim that individuals and businesses will be forced to hand over 10 per cent of their earnings each month to the government-run insurance fund.

The scheme is expected to replace the current two-tier healthcare system with one which integrates both private and government hospitals in the hope of ensuring more equitable healthcare for Malaysians of all classes.

The Health Ministry has repeatedly stated that 1 Care is merely an "upgrade" of Malaysia's current two-pronged healthcare system, and that discussion was "premature" as nothing had been set in stone.

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