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## **DOCTORS SEEK GOVERNMENT ACTION TO PROTECT PATIENTS' RIGHTS AND SAFETY**

**SIBU, SARAWAK, 10 Oct :** The “Regulate MCO” Task Force of the Federation of Private Medical Practitioners’ Associations, Malaysia (FPMPAM) wants the Ministry of Health (MoH) together with the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living (MDT) to take action to protect patients’ and workers’ rights of appropriate and safe medical care. They urge the Government to enact regulations under the provisions of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act (PHFSA) 1998 and Regulations 2006 and the Consumer Protection Act 1999 (November 2019) to regulate the Managed Care Organisations (MCOs). The MCOs are the middlemen whose business is the outsourcing of the management of medical benefits of employees.

The group is concerned that these middlemen MCOs, some which are owned by insurance companies, have carte-blanc power to introduce terms that puts financial interests ahead of patients’ and workers’ healthcare rights and safety, including their rights to continue treatment with the doctors who have been looking after them for many years.

As such, the group who represent more than 2000 private general practitioners and specialists nationwide had recently submitted a petition urging the Prime Minister to urgently enact laws and regulations to curb abuse by the MCOs.

The group also seeks to promote the patients’ rights and safety as consumers of healthcare services via regulatory measures by ensuring that the MCOs:

- Do not interfere with a patient’s right to access and receive medical that they need;
- Do not contravene the medical code of ethics and the Guidelines for Good Medical Practice;
- Provide full transparency of contracts with their employers and doctors pertaining to benefits and exemptions of health coverage;
- Provide a mechanism for their clients/patients and doctors to file their grievances;
- Do not default in the payment of fees for patients which affects continuity of care.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to the Lau King Howe Hospital Memorial Museum in Sibu on Doctors rsDay 2023, Dr Shanmuganathan Ganeson, President of the FPMPAM, said, “We need these regulations so that doctors are not roped in as “fait accompli” when the MCOs’ standard operating procedures and exclusion clauses are nothing more than tools for rationing of care for employees seeking medical treatment. This is counterproductive to the Government’s effort to encourage a productive workforce for economic growth and recovery”.

Commenting on the proposed recommendations, Dr Shanmuganathan also said that these regulations should empower the Government and related medical advisory bodies to protect the public and the employees before they enter into a healthcare service contract with a MCO as well as later when they need medical care.

“It should bar these middlemen from imposing unfair contract terms when consumers, patients and employees are not in a position to bargain freely on what treatment they can receive”.



“These regulations are needed to protect patient’s rights and safety, promote the social and emotional aspects of care as well as the assurance that their doctors are making decisions based solely on medical needs. Worker groups and employees’ unions should also pursue this matter as it affects the health and wellbeing of their members and the working force”.

In September 2023, the FPMPAM submitted an Open Letter to the Prime Minister of Malaysia urging him to urgently enact laws and regulations to stop MCOs from interfering with medical care of patients which contravene medical ethics and the law as well as hurt the overall standard of private healthcare in Malaysia.

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### **About The Federation of Private Medical Practitioners’ Association Malaysia**

(FPMPAM)

The FPMPAM is the national body representing doctors in private practice in Malaysia. FPMPAM is committed to improve the quality of private health care through continuing medical education, continuing professional development of its members, ethics advocacy and public outreach programs. Founded in 1989, it consists of seven state-level associations and has over 5,000 members. For more information on the FPMPAM, please visit <https://fpmpam.org> or <https://www.facebook.com/fpmpam>.

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