

## **MCOs yet to register with ministry**

WE refer to the report "[Docs and ING in stalemate over proposal](#)" (*The Star*, April 3).

A managed care organisation (MCO) is defined in the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 (Act 586) as any organisation or body with whom a private healthcare facility or service provider has an arrangement or contract to provide healthcare services within an agreed financing system.

The Health Ministry (MOH) through the previous Health Minister, made a statement last year, that all MCOs be registered with the ministry by March 31, 2008.

To date, only six MCOs have registered. We have reasons to believe that there are another estimated 50 MCOs that have yet to register.

This has caused much concern to the ministry because it cannot resolve the various issues raised by many parties affected by these dealings.

As patients' healthcare is our paramount responsibility, the ministry wishes to respond to the issues as follows:

### **(a) MCOs to be licensed under Act 586**

All MCOs that provide any health-related services should be licensed under Act 586 so as to effectively regulate their activities in their dealings with other private healthcare facilities or service providers.

This requirement shall be specified by the Health Minister pursuant to Section 3(k) of Act 586 and to be notified in the Gazette.

### **(b) Fee Splitting**

Fee splitting is prohibited under both the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Regulations of 2006 and the Malaysian Medical Council's Code of Professional Conduct.

It is our view that any form of arrangement made by parties with the intent of inducing the relevant parties to refer or receive patients from one another will amount to fee splitting.

In light of the dispute relating to this fee splitting among the interested parties, the ministry wishes to reiterate its view that any form of discount on professional fees can be construed as intention to induce that doctor to compromise his professional judgment for financial gain which may lead to the detriment of his patient.

This view is in line with the Code of Professional Conduct for Practitioners of the Malaysian Medical Council on fees splitting and may subject the practitioner to disciplinary punishment under the Medical Act 1971.

Having stated the above, the ministry will not interfere with dealings that allow discount on any other charges including hospital administrative charges.

With the above clarification, we urge all MCOs that have yet to register to do so immediately.

All private healthcare facilities or service providers are advised to take heed of the ministry's stand on fee splitting and to deal only with registered MCOs.

**TAN SRI DR MOHD ISMAIL MERICAN, Director General of Health, Malaysia.**