



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to Editor

1 June 2020

STOP UNETHICAL PRACTICES BY PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Do private hospitals not have any corporate social responsibility towards their patients and the public, especially during times of emergency, or are such periods/ occasions just another business opportunities to make more money?

A private hospital in KL was recently fined RM200,000.00 by the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs for charging RM11.20 for face masks that are price-controlled at RM1.50 each..

In Penang, we have received a complaint that a private hospital is billing patients RM5.00 for “A & E/ Outpatient Precautionary Measure”. What this jargon means is that the charge is for temperature scanning when the patient walks into the hospital.

During this Covid-19 emergency period, taking temperature reading of people walking into hospitals, offices, stores, etc. is a requirement of the Ministry of Health. In other words it is mandated by law and must be done.

As such, is it ethical or even right for the party doing the body temperature scanning to charge any fee for doing so? It is not a government tax, but clean income for whoever is doing the scanning. Patients, e.g. dialysis cases, have to make 3 visits per week, and have to pay this extra RM5.00 per visit. The practice smacks of profiteering.

According to the Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia (APHM), private hospitals “are not retailers” but healthcare service providers. If the hospital had purchased the masks at RM1.50 each (which is not likely as bulk purchase is usually cheaper), then they had been marked up by 750% to sell at RM11.20 to the patients. Do the ethics of the medical profession allow for this?

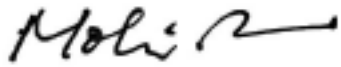
Whether or not private hospitals are retailers is besides the point. The masks are price- controlled at RM1.50 each. It is mandatory to use them during this Covid-19 emergency. When the hospital charged patients RM11.20 for each mask used by the hospital staff attending to them, the hospital sold the masks to the patients at an exorbitant mark-up of 750%.

The picture being painted by the APHM is that private hospitals are not making money, but just about breaking even and need to be creative to find ways of earning a little extra. This does not go down well with the public which asks if private hospitals are not money-making machines, why have so many private hospitals sprung up?

We call upon the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs to

ensure that private hospitals do not overcharge patients and that during times like the present they do not exploit/ victimise patients with unethical additional charges.

Apart from that, the hospitals which have been charging excessively for masks and temperature scanning should be required to make refunds to the patients.



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