

PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE • 3 JULY 2020

Patient Safety is Our Priority

As health professionals, we are trained to “first, do no harm”. Everyone’s top priority is patient safety. Therefore, the Malaysian Health Coalition is deeply saddened by the repeated incidents of fires in Hospital Sultanah Aminah (HSA) in Johor Bahru. We urge all stakeholders to relentlessly strengthen patient safety in all respects, including in ensuring that all safety regulations for healthcare facilities are always met.

In maximising patient safety, we urge the following:

1. Increase transparency for public health data

Health systems should err on the side of transparency to maximise patient safety. While we acknowledge that some categories of information should be confidential for patient privacy reasons, data concerning public health must be made accessible. In particular, and alongside many other stakeholders including many politicians from both sides, we call for the publication of the report into the 2016 HSA fires. Relevant parties must be appropriately held accountable for their actions or inactions which led to the HSA fires. Transparency will strengthen patient safety, identify opportunities for improvement, increase accountability and debunk conspiracy theories.

2. Strengthen information-sharing between health sectors

Health data and information should also be shared across relevant ministries, health professional societies and researchers to further strengthen our health system. In the current system, some data which helps produce the Ministry of Health’s Annual Reports remains inaccessible even to researchers. If all areas of our health system can contribute to and source from a shared database, we can draw a more comprehensive picture of Malaysia’s population health and collaborate to find solutions for health inequities in the country.

3. Invest in information technology to improve healthcare delivery and safety

Errors in healthcare are inevitable in any country, but we must relentlessly strive to reduce them. Employing technology and using non-punitive pathways to detect and resolve errors will be crucial. The government must invest in information technology systems and infrastructure to ensure easy access to accurate and updated data for healthcare delivery and safety. Besides that, improved patient safety requires a cultural shift in favour of non-punitive inquisition for early detection and resolution of errors in and around our healthcare system, before there is irreversible damage.

Public trust in our healthcare system depends on patient safety as the most fundamental duty of care, and patient safety is everyone’s responsibility. While it is impossible to be free of error and risk, all stakeholders must work together to maximise patient safety in Malaysia’s health system.

BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA.

Malaysian Health Coalition

48 Member Societies & 19 Individuals

Full Signature List on myhealthcoalition.org.

3 July 2020