

Priority approval for dialysis patients

I REFER to the article "Dialysis patients in dire straits" (*The Star*, Nov 7) which revealed that the Health Ministry (MOH) had issues with the subsidy of the RM50 to deserving patients.

Many NGO-run centres were affected as poor patients they cared for waited too long for subsidies and thus the patients were either burdened with the cost (although treatment cost was lower than the private centres) or, as in the case of MAA Medicare, we provided the subsidy via various channels until the MOH approved these patients subsidy.

The MOH should be applauded for taking on the burden of spending millions to subsidise these patients for their treatment and EPO injections for many years. Thus one can only assume that this is a temporary hiccup with the MOH.

The Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah clearly stated that the MOH would not stop the subsidy to these thousands of deserving patients.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak had announced additional support for Continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD) treatment, as an option for patients to do dialysis at home. He further stressed that the delay in approval was also due to two main issues; incomplete forms submitted and that some centres were not licensed.

I suggest that NGO-run centres be proactive and not just sit back and wait for these approvals but keep in constant contact with the relevant departments as we had 15 patients' subsidy approved two months ago, while 37 are still on the waiting list for approvals.

Hence I doubt it is fair to say that subsidies were not approved since 2011.

I would also like to suggest that all incomplete forms be returned soonest, and a deadline be given for resubmission.

The MOH should allow the NGOs to play an active role and highlight the critically deserving among their own pool of patients on the waiting list to enable "priority approval".

Meanwhile, NGOs should not turn away poor patients who seek treatment simply because the MOH had delayed approving subsidies.

After all this was the main reason NGO centres were established – to help the poor Malaysians. Let's all do our part.

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