

Wednesday May 6, 2009

I REFER to the letter from T S Ramasamy, ♦Limiting supply of medicines a burden on the aged♦ (The Star, May 4), and would like to air my view on the issue.

Although his view is of good intent in its context, I beg to differ on the practice of dispensing too much medicinal supply to one patient to cover a long period as there are more cons than pros.

Firstly, it is uncertain what the fate of the medicine will be when large amounts are dispensed to the patient for over a long period. The medicine may not be kept in its intended storage condition, which may lead to spoilage (e.g. fungus growth) and loss of potency.

It is certainly better to get a fresh stock of medicine through regular replenishment at the hospital or clinic rather than taking stale medicine collected some months ago.

Secondly, there could also be the tendency for individuals to share the medicines for certain common illnesses (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, etc) although the same illness may require a different dosage or a different medicine tailored for the individual♦s existing condition.

Besides, too much medicine kept in the house can also be a safety risk to the unknown, especially children.

Thirdly, an individual♦s illness may change progressively over a period of time, hence requiring periodic visits to the doctor. The medicines previously prescribed may no longer be suitable.

If large amounts of medicines had been dispensed from a previous visit, it will be a great waste to discard the leftover medications as they could have been better dispensed for other patients♦ benefits.

Fourthly, handing out large amounts of medicines to patients will create an artificial demand in the pharmaceutical market, which will upset the realistic demand and supply situation.

Lastly, I would like to say that we Malay♦sians are indeed a very lucky lot. By paying just RM1 at the government clinic or hospital, one can get medical treatment and take home a range of medicines intended for long-term treatment, besides the services of doctors and other trained allied health professionals from nurses, laboratory technologists, pharmacists, etc.

Just check how much these medications would have cost us if we were to get them from the private clinics or hospitals. As a caring community, it should not be too burdensome for a family member or friend to collect the medicine from the clinic or hospital for the aged.

YK CHANG,

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