

Warning on those doing orthodontic treatment

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KUALA LUMPUR: General dental practitioners who have no proper training in orthodontic treatment are not allowed to carry out such treatment.

Alarmed at the increase in such practitioners performing orthodontic treatment, director-general of Health Tan Sri Dr Ismail Merican warned people to be careful when choosing their dentists.

"Of late, there have been serious concerns about people who, after attending short courses (some unrecognised) on orthodontic treatment, profess to be experts in the field and proceed to undertake complex cases that have led to dire consequences for patients," he told the New Straits Times.

Dr Ismail said these practitioners, while allowed to undertake basic orthodontic treatment, had chosen to ignore their limitations when electing to manage complex cases.

Orthodontics is a dental specialty largely concerned with the study and treatment of malocclusions (improper bites) and disproportionate jaw structures which, by and large, requires treatment with dental braces.

Dr Ismail said the specialty required an additional three to four years of full-time clinical training, further to the five years of undergraduate dental training needed to qualify as a general dental practitioner.

At present, there are only 114 qualified orthodontists in the country. The shortage was due to limited availability of places for training both locally and internationally, as well as the high costs involved in the training of these specialists.

Dr Ismail said in Malaysia more general dental practitioners provided orthodontic treatment for their patients because it was lucrative and there were no regulations restricting them from undertaking orthodontic treatment.

He stressed that only those with qualifications recognised by the Malaysian Dental Council (MDC) could practise dentistry and they should display publicly their certificates in their clinics.

Malaysians who want to do orthodontic treatment are urged to scrutinise the credentials of dental practitioners.

They can also contact the Malaysian Dental Council, Level 5, Block E 10, Parcel E, Precinct 1, 62590 Putrajaya (Tel: 03-8883 4217; Fax: 03-8888 6133; email: mdc@moh.gov.my) for clarification.

They can also call the Malaysian Association of Orthodontists (Tel: 03- 4145 4200; email: president@mao.org.my)

