

'Stricter laws, subsidies to curb abandonment of the elderly'

PETALING JAYA: Geriatric experts are warning families that their failure to pay for elder care is becoming a serious problem, calling for stronger enforcement and government support to prevent what they describe as a form of abandonment.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing senior research officer Chai Sen Tyng said the government should consider introducing long-term care insurance to ease the financial strain on welfare homes.

He also called for a clearer regulatory framework, noting that old folks homes currently fall under different laws, the Care Centres Act for general care centres and the Private Healthcare

Facilities and Services Act for nursing homes.

"Lodging police reports or enforcing contracts is easier said than done. Some unlicensed homes may not report due to their status, while licensed homes sometimes take in elderly residents referred by government facilities," he said.

Malaysia Healthy Ageing Society vice-president Dr Wong Teck Wee said families struggle with a mix of financial hardship and changing social norms.

"Some genuinely face financial constraints, while others simply disengage after placing the elderly in care homes. Malaysian families once upheld filial piety strongly, but urbanisation, smaller households, longer lifespans and



Better enforcement needed: (From left) Chai, Dr Wong and Delren.

rising care costs have changed the picture."

Dr Wong urged the government to provide subsidies and grants, and to enforce laws against elderly abandonment.

Welfare homes, he added, should also require mandatory

financial guarantors, with at least two responsible parties, similar to hospital admission protocols.

He said this provision should be strengthened under the proposed Senior Citizens Bill.

Dr Wong further suggested that a national database of elder care

residents would allow the authorities to track those at risk.

Meanwhile, Association for Residential Aged Care Operators president Delren Terrence Douglas said that while legal provisions for punishment and protection exist, they are not comprehensive in offering practical solutions for the elderly.

"I suggest homes work with NGOs to manage infrastructure and fundraising," he said.

Delren added that the Senior Citizens Bill should also address the responsibility for payment on a case-by-case basis.

"There may be situations involving strained family relationships, and the bill should emphasise the need for tribunal sessions to resolve such cases."