

## Restriction of private consultation fees: GMOA asks why other professions exempted

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Dr. Padeniya

Private Health Services Regulatory Council (PHSRC) Director Dr. Mrs. Kanthi Ariyaratne yesterday said that all private hospitals Chairmen, Chief Executive Officers and Medical Directors attached to hospitals had been asked to charge Rs. 250 as administrative cost and not more than Rs. 2,000 as consultation fee per person.

Dr. Mrs. Ariyaratne pointed out that the PHSRC had received many complaints

from patients, community action groups and the Consumer Affairs Authority and the Presidential Secretariat against private channelling centres which charged extortionate fees.

After many rounds of negotiations held with the private hospital managers and obtaining views and observations from different stakeholders, it had been decided to request all private hospitals to comply with revised consultation and

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hospital charges newly introduced, the PHSRC Director said.

She said some consultants had been charging as much as Rs. 8,000 to Rs. 10,000 per visit. Health Minister Maithripala Sirisena has decided to introduce a revision of all consultation charges as he himself had paid Rs. 8,000 for a consultation once.

Dr. Mrs. Ariyaratne stressed that no private hospital was expected to charge more than Rs. 2,000 per consultation until further notice. Every private hospital should display the consultation fees prominently for everybody to see.

Health Minister Maithripala Sirisena, contacted for comment said that a majority of private hospitals had been exploiting innocent patients ruthlessly by charging exorbitant fees.

He said following our report last week on the government move to

regulate private channelling fees, a group of consultants had called the Presidential Secretariat and President Mahinda Rajapaksa had personally asked him about the new scheme.

Minister Sirisena said that he had explained to President Rajapaksa that the charges made by most private hospitals were unreasonable and exorbitant. The Ministry was in the process of introducing legislation to revise all consultation fees at a fixed sum so that even an ordinary man could afford such services. He said he had the President's blessings.

GMOA President Dr. Anuruddha Padeniya, contacted for comment, said that it was not fair to restrict only medical consultants' fees. There were other professionals like lawyers, engineers, architects and their charges must also be regulated. He said doctors should not be discriminated against.