



Hospital Autonomy increases service quality for patients of public hospitals in Laos

Public hospitals in Laos are working to achieve autonomy in a bid to improve service standards, reduce the number of people paying for medical services in other countries, and encourage VIP and private patients to make use of state-run facilities.

Minister of Health Ms Baikham Khattiya chaired a high-level meeting on February 13 with directors general from the ministry, directors of five central hospitals, and leading health officials from 10 provinces taking part in a pilot programme.

Mrs Baikham gave guidance on the reform process and spelled out three key goals: improving services for all patients, using resources more efficiently, and winning back VIP and private patients who typically seek treatment at private hospitals or overseas clinics.

Hospital autonomy allows management teams to make faster decisions on day-to-day operations and to allocate resources more effectively for diagnosis and treatment, so that hospitals can respond better to patient needs.



Minister of Health Ms Baikham Khattiya chairs a high-level meeting on hospital autonomy.

Starting in 2022, Mahosot, Mittaphab and Setthathirath hospitals have piloted the use of autonomy, while the Mother and Newborn Hospital, the Children's Hospital and 10 provincial hospitals joined the programme last year.

The provincial hospitals taking part are in Bokeo, Oudomxay, Xayabouly, Xiengkhouang, Luang Prabang, Vientiane, Bolikhamxay, Khammuan, Savannakhet and Champasak.

The health minister urged hospital heads to lead staff in a patient-centred and quality-focused way, and to build trust among medical staff and patients.

Those in charge must be accountable role models and motivate their teams so that staff are inspired to improve services, she said.

Director General of the Department of Healthcare and Rehabilitation, Dr Khampasong Theppanya, reported on progress to date and outlined plans to further develop the legal framework around hospital autonomy.

Director General of the Department of Organisation and Personnel, Dr Bounsarth Keopraseuth, said motivated personnel are essential and that hospital culture must shift towards greater self-responsibility.

Director General of the Department of Planning and Finance, Dr Viengmany Bounkham, highlighted the need for professional financial management and strong accountability and transparency.

A management expert with the Swiss Lao Hospital Project, Dr Alphons Schnyder, said public hospitals in Laos need to improve service standards so they are better placed to compete with private hospitals.

Skills in leadership, management, marketing, financial management, human resources management and change management must be strengthened to improve patient care, he added.

The Swiss Lao Hospital Project has supported the design and development of hospital autonomy since 2019, providing leadership and management training for hospital directors and key staff, and helping hospitals develop action plans.

By Times Reporters
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