



Azneal Ishak | malaysiakini.c

LETTER | In case you didn't know, doctors are not robots

Concerned Doctor

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LETTER | Let me share with you what many won't. An average permanent medical officer in the government service earns between RM6,000 and RM8,000 a month depending on her/his grade and the number of on calls they do.

Let me share with you what many don't know. A government medical officer works nearly 80 to 100 hours a week depending on which field they partake in (on calls can be as long as 33-hour stretches, sometimes without time for a meal/bath/sleep).

Now imagine that we are moving into a time where medical officers are not getting permanent posts, are paid less and are not offered scholarships to pursue their specialities. I hear of colleagues also complaining that there are some fields where they have pursued a masters and a PhD but without any signs of specialisation within the system

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This is the system we live in. We work till it affects our physical and mental health (at times to no avail) but yet we are treated like dirt. The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) recently conducted a poll on Twitter and it showed that on average 95 percent (poll in English [96 percent] and BM [93 percent]) of Malaysians felt that doctors were taken for a ride by many sectors.

To top it all off, some of my colleagues called and expressed their frustrations on the phone with me. Some were even being denied their basic salary hike/grade hike (all time based) even though they qualified for it. Some were told to be happy at where they were and be thankful for what they have.

Some were in tears - their family members needed to go to IJN for their appointments but their family members names have been deregistered from the list of patients continuing their follow-up in IJN (cleared because they did not attend the clinics during the pandemic). Many were told to get referrals again from their local/nearest cardiology departments and they too were reluctant to provide a referral back to IJN as they have been 'instructed' to prevent referrals to IJN.

Colleagues of mine are tired, stretched to the max and fatigued by the pandemic. Meanwhile, all appointments of their family members were deferred as they fought the pandemic and opted to just continue medical therapy hoping to get their reviews after things settle.

They were told that the IJN government patient decluttering had begun - many doctors and their family members were not part of the shortlisted patients. In fact, one colleague was

not part of the shortlisted patients. In fact, one colleague was told that for IJN procedures, even government servants would have to pay for materials like their stents etc, something which should be done for free as part of being a government servant (some as costly as RM7,000).

How does a medical doctor survive? They can't earn enough, they are not getting their entitled benefits, their current benefits are being withdrawn and society jumps on them when the government announces a bonus for them at the beginning of the year.

They have a poor quality of life, they are now made to pay for what has been agreed to be their entitlement, they cannot specialise, they cannot be gazetted and yet they are made to work like robots.

These are young doctors, with families, with children, with elderly parents, with aspirations but are being denied at every turn.

And yet in this country, we offer felons and people convicted in court to be given government land/houses and perks etc. Just by browsing through their social media and looking at their luxurious lifestyle, they very well do not need it.

Is this fair? Wake up, Malaysia!

The views expressed here are those of the author/contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of *Malaysiakini*.