

MMA Demands Digital Mapping Of Health Care Human Resources

By CodeBlue | 14 August 2024

MMA calls for a digitalised mapping of health care human resources in the public sector, amid staff shortages, besides a public online dashboard with real-time doctor numbers and patient counts in government hospitals for the public to plan their visits.



Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz. Photo courtesy of MMA.

KUALA LUMPUR, August 14 — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) told the government today to immediately begin a digital mapping of its health care workforce, as a doctors' shortage grows more dire.

MMA highlighted *CodeBlue's* reports of severe manpower shortages at [Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Hospital \(HOSHAS\)](#) in Temerloh, Pahang, and a [district hospital in the northern region](#), where doctors reportedly warned the Ministry of Health (MOH) that patient care was being compromised.

"The solution to the problem we strongly believe, would be the digitalised mapping of health care human resources. Digitalisation will also enable transparency and efficiency in the necessary approvals process, as well as more accurate budgeting to facilitate planning," MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in a statement.

“Without regular updating of data on patient load and composition of workforce, we will not know the true extent of shortages and the needs of each facility. This is why the MMA has been pushing for real time digital mapping of health care human resources.

“All State Health Departments and the MOH’s human resources department should already have data on the distribution of the health care workforce in the respective states but up to now, there has been no transparency.

“Without transparency on this important data, these issues of shortages and uneven distribution of health care workers (maldistribution) would very likely persist; cause more burnout, overcrowding, brain drain and, in some cases, seriously affect the quality of patient care.”

In both HOSHAS and the district hospital in the northern region, doctors have complained about multiplied workloads on medical officers, since the MOH began diverting house officers from district to state hospitals and [restricted housemen placements to state hospitals at the start of the year.](#)

HOSHAS is a major public hospital that serves as a referral centre for Central and West Pahang, providing subspecialty services for other cluster hospitals. As for the district hospital in the northern region in question, according to a letter sent by a medical officer to *CodeBlue*, the author’s facility also provides subspecialty services.

Besides the two *CodeBlue* reports published in the past two days, [news portal Scoop also reported last Monday](#) one-year delays of angiograms for patients at Sultan Idris Shah Hospital’s (HSIS) Heart Centre in Serdang, Selangor, due to limited beds, equipment, and staff in the cardiology department.

MMA said today that it was informed that many heads of department have not been updating the relevant departments, let alone submitting requests for manpower despite facing shortages.

“The government should invest in a digital system to simplify the process – where updating can be done in real time so that all departments, including the health minister, will be up to date on the distribution of human resources. It is important to note that each department in our health care system has a specific headcount requirement to be functioning optimally,” said Dr Azizan.

MMA told the MOH that it cannot simply relocate large numbers of health care workers every now and then as stop-gap measures, saying: “These issues are affecting patient care.”

The doctors’ group also called for a public online dashboard with real-time information on the number of house officers, medical officers, specialists, services available, and the patient count for each public health care facility to “assist the public in planning their hospital visits.”

“We believe this useful feature – if well implemented and widely used by the public – can significantly reduce congestion at our health care facilities. Many are unaware of the peak periods at these facilities.”

In recent months, certain departments in various government hospitals have simply put up printed signs at their facility to inform the public about estimated waiting times due to staff shortages.