

MMA calls for digital mapping to fix healthcare worker shortages and imbalances

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The current system suffered from a lack of coordination, which contributed to the uneven distribution of healthcare workers across facilities. - NSTP/ASWADI ALIAS (for illustration purposes only)

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) wants the government to swiftly implement a digital mapping system for the nation's healthcare workforce. Its president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said this step was crucial for addressing ongoing shortages and imbalances in the distribution of healthcare workers.

She said there was a need for transparency from the Health Ministry, its human resources department, and state health departments regarding workforce distribution.

"We cannot continue relying on temporary relocations of healthcare staff as a stop-gap measure; these issues are impacting patient care," she said in a statement today.

The statement came after a news report on the severe manpower shortages at the Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah Hospital in Temerloh and a hospital in the northern region where patient care was reported to be affected.

Dr Azizan also urged departments experiencing critical shortages to promptly report these issues to their hospital directors and submit requests for additional manpower.

"Attach all necessary data to support your requests to ensure that hospital directors can effectively advocate for additional staff from the state health departments and the Health Ministry's human resources planning division."

She pointed out that real-time updates on workforce changes were essential for efficient human resources planning, advocating for digitalisation to facilitate this process.

"The MMA believes that digitised mapping of healthcare human resources is the solution to improving transparency and efficiency in the approval process, as well as accurate budgeting for better planning."

Dr Azizan said that many department heads had not been updating relevant departments or submitting manpower requests despite shortages.

"The government should invest in a digital system that allows real-time updates so that all departments, including the health minister, stay informed about workforce distribution. Each healthcare department has specific staffing needs to function optimally."

She said the current system suffered from a lack of coordination, which contributed to the uneven distribution of healthcare workers across facilities.

"Digital mapping will enable better transparency and efficiency, reducing burnout, overcrowding, brain drain, and potentially improving patient care quality."

Dr Azizan also proposed creating an online dashboard providing real-time information on the number of house officers, medical officers, specialists, available services, and patient counts at each public healthcare facility.

"This feature could significantly reduce congestion at healthcare facilities by informing the public of peak periods."

With increasing demand for healthcare services, she stressed the urgency of starting the digital mapping process now.

"It may take time to fully implement, but we must begin this process immediately to address current challenges and prepare for future needs."