

Medical association calls on Health Ministry to explain nationwide housemen shortage



Dr Azizan says an explanation from the ministry's leadership would help allay the many concerns expressed by colleagues and members of the public concerning the shortage of housemen. — Bernama file pic

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KUCHING, Jan 20 — The Ministry of Health (MoH) would have to explain the reasons behind the shortages of housemen in healthcare facilities throughout Malaysia.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz made this call following reports by health news portal CodeBlue, which reported that a dire shortage of housemen was forcing Universiti Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC)'s Department of Medicine to consider adopting a 'Zero HO (No Housemen) Protocol'.

Dr Azizan regarded any shortage of housemen at healthcare facilities as 'concerning' as it would have an impact on the delivery of public healthcare services, adding that over 70 per cent of the population depended on the public healthcare system for their healthcare needs.

“It is perplexing to hear that there are housemen shortages, especially since between 3,000 to 5,000 medical graduates are being produced each year.

“How many of these medical graduates have entered the healthcare system in the last three years and how many have resigned?

“How many are not interested in clinical work?

“The eHO portal has been set up for medical graduates to choose their preferred locations for placements, but are all of them applying for it?

“Are medical graduates being too selective over where they wish to serve?

“The MMA hopes the MOH would shed light on this issue.

“Also, ground sentiments have indicated that there were glitches in the eHO system. It is hoped that sufficient steps had been taken by the government to rectify the technical issues,” she said in a statement.

Dr Azizan said an explanation from the ministry’s leadership would help allay the many concerns expressed by colleagues and members of the public concerning the shortage of housemen.

CodeBlue had reported that the UMMC’s Medicine Department was cutting certain services and collecting reported cases of suboptimal care or ‘near misses’ resulting from manpower shortage.

Dr Azizan said the cutting of services was a concern that must be addressed as UMMC still stands as the main public hospital serving the people of Petaling Jaya — a major area in Selangor.

She added that there were also concerns about the workload of medical officers (MOs) at the UMMC to increase significantly should there be a ‘Zero HO Protocol’.

Adding on, she said this could lead to further burnout and over time, resignations among MOs frustrated with the system.

“UMMC is a healthcare facility under the MoHE (Ministry of Higher Education); therefore, it is hoped that both the MoH and MoHE would work together towards a more sustainable solution concerning the placements of housemen, housemanship training and the facility’s manpower issues.

“These issues have highlighted yet again, the urgent need for detailed long-term planning of healthcare human resources and digitalisation of the public healthcare system for data-driven, informed decisions.

“We also hope this issue would not extend to the Ministry of Defence’s healthcare facilities.

“With detailed monitoring of real time data on the public healthcare workforce, we believe these gaps in the distribution of healthcare workers seen nationwide could be efficiently and effectively addressed.

“The MMA remains committed to working with the government to ensure the sustainability, efficiency and effectiveness of our healthcare system,” said Dr Azizan. — Borneo Post Online