

## Poison pen letters a sign doctors do not trust the system, says MMA

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PETALING JAYA: Doctors must respect due process by reporting incidents of bullying using official channels, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

"We urge public healthcare doctors to either lodge a report via the official public complaints system (Sispaa), the Health Ministry's MyHelp portal, MMA's HelpDoc or make a police report, rather than seek justice via trial by media," said MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz.

"It's troubling to see poison pen letters circulating on social media. However, it is time for the Health Ministry to look into reasons why the doctors are taking to other means such as social media to be heard.

"One likely reason is a lack of trust in the system," said Dr Azizan in a statement on Wednesday (March 20).

She said for victims of workplace bullying, every moment endured is significant, as it could be disheartening when reports on bullying are met with sluggish response and minimum action, which can result in perpetrators evading consequences.

"In September 2023 a group of doctors from a Sabah public hospital used MMA's HelpDoc channel to report what appeared to be a clear cut case of bullying involving specialists and several medical officers.

"However, the same complainant recently contacted MMA to report that the bullying has not stopped. This could mean there is something not right within the system," she said.

Dr Azizan said the Health Ministry's establishment of the Healthcare Work Culture Improvement Taskforce in 2022 to review the work culture in public healthcare was a step in the right direction but there was no follow through with the implementation of any of its recommendations.

"The government must explain why, especially if it involved taxpayers' money.

"Public healthcare workforce morale is currently at an all time low given the five year trend of resignations among contract doctors and specialists in public healthcare and failing to effectively address bullying will undoubtedly exacerbate this issue," added Dr Azizan.