



# Poison pen letters indicate lack of trust in system, says MMA

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**The Malaysian Medical Association wants the health ministry to outline the procedure for the reporting and management of bullying and sexual harassment cases.**



*MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz called on the health ministry to take a more proactive stand in investigating claims of bullying and sexual harassment in public hospitals. (File pic)*

PETALING JAYA: Poison pen letters on bullying and sexual harassment in public hospitals likely indicate a lack of trust in the healthcare system, says the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

In a statement, MMA called on the health ministry to outline the standard operating procedure (SOP) for the reporting and management of such cases, adding that a timeline to complete investigations should also be established.

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz also said the health ministry should look into limiting certain powers given to heads of departments and hospital directors, adding that independent panel members needed to be included in its integrity unit to ensure a fair hearing of bullying cases.



Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz.

“It is troubling to see poison pen letters circulating on social media,” she said in a statement.

“It is time the health ministry looks into why its doctors are taking to other means such as social media to be heard.

“One likely reason is a lack of trust in the (current) system.”

She added that it can be “disheartening” when reports on bullying and sexual harassment are met with “sluggish responses and minimal action”, which Azizan said could result in perpetrators evading consequences.

Nevertheless, Azizan stressed that doctors must respect due process by continuing to report bullying and sexual harassment incidents through official channels such as the Public Complaints Management System (SISPAA).

SISPAA is an online platform for the public to file complaints against civil servants, make enquiries, and give suggestions regarding government services.

Azizan said affected parties could also lodge complaints through the health ministry’s MyHelp portal, MMA’s HelpDoc hotline, or make a police report.

She also called on the health ministry to take a more proactive stand in investigating such cases, citing a case last September when doctors from a public hospital in Sabah used MMA’s HelpDoc hotline to report bullying involving specialists and medical officers.

“We appropriately escalated the matter to the health ministry and were duly informed that the case was being investigated.

“However, the same complainants recently contacted MMA to report that the bullying had not stopped. This could mean that something is not right with the system,” she said.

Last week, an anonymous letter made its rounds on social media stating that a group of former housemen had filed a complaint with the director of the Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital in Ipoh about a series of alleged sexual harassment incidents involving a doctor there.

Police have urged those who claimed to have been sexually harassed by the doctor to lodge reports with them, while the Perak health department said an independent investigation committee was set up on Feb 29 to look into the complaints.