

# MMA: Care for contract MOs

**NATION** 

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PUTRAJAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) hopes the government will consider issues it raised concerning contract medical officers (MOs) so that their welfare and career advancement will be looked after.

Dr N. Ganabaskaran, MMA's president, said that despite the Cabinet approval that their grade would start from UD43, there has been little news on the matter.

"We hope the Health Ministry acts fast to ensure this travesty of justice is corrected and the contract is upgraded accordingly," he said.

The MMA called for the salaries of contract MOs to be on par with those permanently employed, arguing that it was unfair for them, who completed their two-year housemanship, to be graded lower than permanent doctors despite both doing the same job.

The contract positions were introduced in 2016.

Currently, fresh doctors must undergo a two-year housemanship before serving a two-year stint as MOs at government hospitals.

In November last year, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the Cabinet agreed with the ministry's proposal to raise the grade of contract MOs from UD41 to UD43.

On career progression, Dr Ganabaskaran said that despite the first batch of contract MOs having less than 11 months to complete their second year, only 15% of them were offered permanent positions.

"The selection process was less than transparent with many still wondering about their fate.

"Despite many meeting all criteria and being exemplary doctors, many will be left unemployed," he claimed and pointed that despite the obvious shortage of doctors to maintain and improve healthcare services, there was a lack of positions for MOs nationwide.

"Thus, despite turning down a possible career overseas, these doctors who returned to serve the country are not offered an extension to their contracts nor a permanent position as there is none available at the moment," he added.

Dr Ganabaskaran said MMA had made two proposals -- an increase of between 1,500 and 2,000 new MO positions yearly to match the population growth and the demands on the healthcare system.

“We submitted the proposal during the Budget 2020 engagement and during our various discussions with the Finance Ministry and the Health Ministry,” he said.

The second proposal was an interim measure to offer an extended five-year contract after compulsory service for MOs to complete their specialisation.

Dr Ganabaskaran said the five-year extended contract was sufficient for a doctor to complete the specialist training and from there, be absorbed as a specialist with a special bond with the government.

“The authorities should act now to engage in discussions and listen to proposals for a solution that will ensure these doctors are given a fair chance to progress and the country moves towards universal healthcare,” he said.

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