

Malaysian Medical Association: Increase allocation to reform public healthcare system

BY CHURCHILL EDWARD ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2024, FRIDAY AT 7:02 AM [SARAWAK](#)

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Dr Kalwinder Singh says that the increase in healthcare allocation will accelerate MMA's target of reaching five per cent of the country's GDP growth.

KUCHING (Sept 27): An overall increase in the allocation of healthcare for the Budget 2025 is essential to improve and reform the public healthcare system, said the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA).

In a statement, its president Dato Dr Kalwinder Singh Khaira said that the increase in healthcare allocation will accelerate MMA's target of reaching five per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth.

"The Health White Paper tabled in parliament last year called for an increase in the health budget in phases to reach five per cent of the nation's GDP.

“However it is hoped that a definitive time frame will be given to achieve this target with clear milestones set in Budget 2025,” he said.

As more than 70 per cent of Malaysians rely on public healthcare services for their healthcare needs, Dr Kalwinder called for urgent steps to be taken to retain the healthcare workers by improving their work life balance, their benefits and the overall service efficiency.

“The brain drain and resignations of both junior and senior doctors are occurring at an alarming rate and these need to be addressed,” he stressed.

Among the proposals that MMA had put forward was to look into creating more new positions within the system.

“As creating more new positions within the system may be a challenge, we ask that the government look into creating ‘Khas Untuk Penyandang (KUP) Gred Khas C’ posts for specialists who have been stagnating at the UD56 scale.”

Up to 100 are senior doctors who got their UD56 in 2017 and have since been stagnating at this scale, he pointed out.

“The last such promotion exercise was in 2012 where a few hundred ‘KUP Khas C’ posts were specially created and this had enabled many doctors to move up to ‘Gred Khas C’.”

“After 13 years, another one-off creation of ‘KUP Khas C’ is very much required to help retain experienced senior doctors who are needed to treat, teach and mentor in the public sector,” he stressed.

This creation of up to 150 to 200 ‘KUP Gred Khas C’ posts, he said, will go a long way in reducing resignations and clearing the bottleneck the health sector is having now and especially so for those on the UD 56 scale since the year 2017.

MMA, he added, is also looking forward to the announcement of the new on-call rates which is expected to be included as part of Budget 2025.

According to him, MMA had proposed an increase in the hourly active on-call rate for medical officers to RM25 per hour, from the current rate of RM9.16 per hour for weekend active calls.

Similarly, they had also proposed an increase for the specialists’ hourly active on-call allowance rate to RM30 per hour, from the existing RM10.40 per hour for active weekend calls.

As for passive calls for both medical officers and specialists, MMA suggested an increase of 50 per cent from the existing rates.

“This increase is only apt for the sacrifices the healthcare workers make in providing medical services 24 hours a day, seven days a week to all their patients,” he said, in highlighting the need to increase the rates since their last amendment in 2012.

MMA fully supports the government’s recent amendment of the Medical Act to facilitate specialist training, but it is also vital that the doctors be given the freedom to choose the training pathway they wish to pursue, he opined.

“As such the budget for specialist training must be increased and not be a limiting factor to restrict training opportunities for the young doctors in any pathway they choose,” he said, adding that this is to retain medical officers in the system and encourage them to specialise.

“Training under the Masters programmes and parallel pathways must also be given equal attention to meet the growing demand for specialists in the country.

“Increasingly, clinicians are required to take on administrative responsibilities, such as managing clinics and hospitals, keeping up with the newly established Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and handling other managerial duties.”

A dedicated budget should be set aside for management training to better equip these healthcare professionals and for them to effectively manage hospital administration alongside their clinical duties, he said.

For permanent positions, he said the government must include Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contributions as an alternative to the pension scheme because job security is essential for young doctors who are leaving in growing numbers.

“Contract doctor positions should not be continued as over the past few years, these have seemed to be a major cause of career uncertainty and resignations,” he said.

On the need to increase administration efficiency and address overcrowding issues, MMA had also proposed digitalisation in the public healthcare system.

“We hope the Ministry of Health will adopt MMA’s proposal to digitalise the healthcare system for efficiency and effective planning of healthcare human resources, administration and management of appointments in real time,” he said.