

MMA: Address burnout among public healthcare personnel or risk brain drain

By **Fuad Nizam** - February 28, 2024 @ 5:32pm



The Malaysian Medical Association says burnout among medical personnel must be addressed or the public healthcare system will see more people leaving - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) wants the government to address burnout among medical personnel in the public healthcare sector or risk them leaving.

MMA Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz it was recommended that the government switch to a shift system for doctors in public healthcare, similar to the European Working Time Directive (EWTG) to prevent burnout among doctors and further brain drain.

"To mitigate this, the MMA is proposing that the government adopt a shift system for all doctors doing active on-calls in public healthcare – three shifts per day while introducing a flexi-allowance for MOs (medical officers), specialists and subspecialists.

"Currently in Malaysia's public healthcare system, housemen work on a shift system until they complete their training and medical officers and specialists work on an on-call system where those put on active on-call duty work their normal working hours from 8am to 5pm and then begin their on-call hours from 5pm to 8am the next day.

"This is then followed by normal working hours from 8am to 5pm – a total of 33 hours straight. Regularly, due to the heavy workload, MOs and specialists work beyond their on-call hours and only certain departments permit post-on-call time off in the afternoons at the discretion of the head of the unit."

Such long hours, said Dr Azizan, must not continue as doctors cannot perform and deliver the best outcomes.

She also pointed out that burnout among healthcare workers increases the risk of medical errors.

She added at the current rate, if the status quo remains, more public healthcare doctors will leave to either private healthcare or to pursue opportunities abroad.

Earlier today, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad told the Dewan Rakyat that his ministry was currently [strengthening public-private collaboration](#) with the goal of reducing the impact of medical personnel leaving government hospitals for other sectors.

He said that this was part of the ministry's efforts to ensure that such a circumstance did not have an impact on the quality of services provided by government hospitals to the people of the country.

This was as a 2022 survey had shown that 54 per cent of medical personnel left government hospitals to join the private sector and statutory bodies.

The survey, he said, showed that 28 per cent left for personal reasons while six per cent joined public higher education institutions due to "slightly" better remuneration.

Dr Dzulkefly said this in response to a supplementary question from Fong Kui Lun (PH-Bukit Bintang) who asked the ministry for details on the number of medical officers who left government hospitals to join the private sector.

He said the government would continue to make efforts to retain medical personnel at government hospitals by giving better remuneration and incentives.