



MMA proposes 3 shifts daily for doctors to prevent burnout

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz highlights the stark contrast in working hours between Malaysian doctors and doctors elsewhere.

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MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said a doctor's work schedule could amount to 33 hours without a break.

PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to adopt a three-shift system daily, along with the introduction of a flexi-allowance, to prevent burnout among doctors and a further brain drain.

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said the government could emulate the European Working Time Directive, where doctors typically worked an average of 48 hours per week, whereas doctors in Australia generally worked between 35 to 38 hours a week.

This was in stark contrast to the working hours of doctors within Malaysia's public healthcare system, she said.

“Doctors in Malaysia's public healthcare system doing active on-calls in departments such as medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynaecology, orthopaedics, paediatrics and

anaesthesiology, work an average of between 60 and 84 hours per week, depending on manpower resources,” she said in a statement.

Azizan described how medical officers and specialists often endured a demanding work schedule that could amount to a total of 33 hours without a break when on “on-call” duty.

“This must not go on. We cannot expect doctors to perform at their best and deliver the best outcomes when they are clocking in these unreasonable hours,” she said.

“At the rate we are going, if the status quo remains, more public healthcare doctors will leave to either private healthcare or to pursue opportunities abroad.”

Azizan added that besides causing burnout, prolonged working hours also elevated the risk of heart disease, stroke and premature death.

“The number of doctors leaving public healthcare should also not be taken lightly as over 70% of the population depends on public healthcare for their health needs,” she said.

“If left unchecked, our public healthcare could face an impending collapse.”

Earlier today, health minister Dzulkefly Ahmad revealed that more than half of the 1,696 medical officers in the country left the public service sector in 2022.

He said the ministry’s survey found that 4.5% of them are currently working abroad.