



Malaysian Medical Association Proposes Doctor

Shift System to Combat Burnout and Brain Drain

Discover how the Malaysian Medical Association is advocating for a shift system to address the severe burnout and brain drain affecting doctors in Malaysia's public healthcare sector, aiming to improve work-life balance and patient care quality.

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Malaysian Medical Association Proposes Doctor Shift System to Combat Burnout and Brain Drain

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has recently put forward a groundbreaking proposal aimed at transforming the working conditions for doctors within the nation's public healthcare sector. Dr. Azizan Abdul Aziz, the president of MMA, has highlighted the dire need for a shift system, similar to the European Working Time Directive, to alleviate the severe burnout and brain drain plaguing Malaysia's medical professionals. This initiative seeks to reduce the traditionally long work hours from 60-84 to an average of 48 hours weekly, introducing a more humane and sustainable approach to healthcare work schedules.

Urgency for Change

Dr. Azizan brought to light the extreme conditions under which medical officers and specialists are expected to operate, with some working up to 33 consecutive hours due to on-call duties. This unsustainable workload has not only put the health of the healthcare workers at risk, as corroborated by

WHO statistics linking long working hours to increased health hazards, but it has also led to a significant uptick in the resignation rates among contract medical officers and specialists. The proposed shift system, featuring three shifts per day and a flexi-allowance for medical officers, specialists, and subspecialists, aims to mitigate these issues effectively. Dr. Azizan's call for action is further supported by the recent acknowledgement from Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad regarding the alarming rate of medical officers departing from the public sector in 2022.

Addressing the Root Causes

Behind the alarming statistics and the push for a shift system lies a deeper issue of competitive salaries, clear career progression paths, and overall improved working conditions needed to retain doctors within the public healthcare system. The Hartal Doktor Kontrak movement has been instrumental in voicing these concerns, emphasizing the urgent need for systemic changes to prevent the further erosion of Malaysia's healthcare workforce. The MMA's proposal is seen as a crucial step towards addressing these root causes, by not only improving the work-life balance of healthcare workers but also by enhancing patient care quality through a more rested and focused medical staff.

Next Steps and Government Response

In response to MMA's proposal, the government, through Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, has shown a preliminary acknowledgment of the issues faced by the healthcare sector. Immediate measures, such as the processing of locum payments for doctors affected by the suspension of locum allowances, have been announced. These steps, while immediate, underscore the government's recognition of the need for broader reforms to improve the working conditions for healthcare providers and ensure the sustainability of Malaysia's public healthcare system.

The MMA's initiative marks a critical juncture in Malaysia's ongoing struggle to maintain a robust, effective, and compassionate healthcare system. By adopting a shift system and addressing the concerns of medical professionals, Malaysia can hope to stem the tide of brain drain and burnout, ensuring that its citizens continue to receive the high quality of care they deserve. As discussions between the MMA and the government progress, the healthcare community eagerly awaits the implementation of these much-needed reforms.