

## Malaysian medical officers can't go on working for 60 to 84 hours a week, doctors' group warns Health Ministry



*The Malaysian Medical Association has warned the Ministry of Health of the working hours of medical officers in public healthcare system, which it said can stretch up to 84 hours a week. — Reuters pic*

**By Hajar Umira Md Zaki**

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KUALA LUMPUR, 28 Feb — The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has warned the Ministry of Health of the working hours of medical officers in public healthcare system, which it said can stretch up to 84 hours a week.

The doctors' umbrella group said the long hours are not sustainable for the country's healthcare system, which would exacerbate the brain drain as professionals leave for better working conditions in the private sector and abroad.

"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.

"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," its president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said in a statement.

MMA said the government should adopt a three-shift working day with a flexi-allowance for medical officers, specialists and subspecialists following the requirement in the European Working Time Directive (EWTD).

She said that the required working week in EWTD is merely 48 hours a week on average, while doctors in Australia generally work between 35 to 38 hours a week.

This, she said, is contrary to here where medical officers work an average of 60 to 84 hours per week, depending on the manpower resources.



*Dr Azizan expressed her concern that medical officers and specialists worked beyond their on-call hours, which amounted to 33 hours straight without any break. — Borneo Post pic*

“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 to 84 hours per week depending on manpower resources,” she said.

Dr Azizan further expressed her concern that medical officers and specialists worked beyond their on-call hours, which amounted to 33 hours straight without any break.

She further highlighted that long working hours could lead to several illnesses such as increasing the risk of heart disease, stroke and death.

Moreover, Dr Azizan asserted that the significance of doctors exiting public healthcare should not be underestimated, considering that more than 70 per cent of the population relies on public healthcare for their medical requirements.

“If left unchecked, our public healthcare would be facing impending collapse,” she said.

Earlier today, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dzulkefly Ahmad said the government will be appointing another 6,000 medical officers to permanent positions throughout 2024 and 2025.

This comes as he said 1,696 medical officers have resigned from the Health Ministry in 2022, citing opportunities in the private sector or statutory bodies, personal reasons and health issues.