

## MMA Demands Zero Tolerance For Health Worker Abuse

By CodeBlue | 29 September 2023

MMA demands zero tolerance for the abuse of health workers, after Selayang Hospital doctors reported rising aggression at the ED due to long waiting hours. “MMA fears that many other overcrowded public health care facilities would be facing similar issues.”



Selayang Hospital, a tertiary hospital in Selangor. Photo by Saw Siow Feng, taken on July 16, 2023.

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 29 – The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) told the Ministry of Health (MOH) today to address the abuse of health care workers in the public health service.

MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz expressed deep concern that health care workers in Selayang Hospital were beginning to fear for their safety, after *CodeBlue* reported rising aggression, particularly from patients' accompanying relatives, towards emergency doctors.

“MMA takes a serious view of such incidents as there should be zero tolerance towards any form of abusive behaviour, especially at health care facilities,” Dr Azizan said in a [statement](#).

“From the report, it can be said that the persistent overcrowding and staff shortages causing long waits at the departments concerned are among the main contributing factors to the stressful work environment.”

CodeBlue reported last Wednesday complaints by Selayang Hospital medical officers about increasingly frequent verbal abuse – on a daily or weekly basis – against doctors at the emergency department (ED) due to long waiting hours, including one case that led to a staff member filing a police report against a patient’s accompanying relative earlier this month.

Selayang Hospital medical officers noted that the root cause of doctor abuse was manpower shortage, pointing out that the public hospital’s ED alone lost 20 doctors to transfers from the MOH’s nationwide relocation exercise of more than 4,000 medical officers for permanent appointments last July 31. They said there were no replacements.

“To prevent any further untoward incidents from occurring, we urge the Ministry of Health to urgently address the maldistribution issue of its health care workforce at Hospital Selayang as well as all public health care facilities throughout the country,” MMA said today.

The doctors’ group expressed fears that abuse of health care workers may also be occurring in many other public health care facilities.

“While there should be zero tolerance towards abusive behaviour, we should also ensure that the public health care experience is pleasant and truly reflective of Malaysia’s reputation as having one of the best health care systems in the world.”

Dr Azizan told the MOH to be “completely transparent” on the distribution of its health care workforce.

“The MMA would like to reiterate that the workforce distribution should be data driven and mapped according to workload at each health facility.

“This mapping of services would also better inform the public as to the realities faced by health care workers on the ground with regards to staffing issues. Therefore, the public’s expectations are better managed.”

MMA also urged the government to expand the Madani Medical Scheme – which currently provides low-income earners fully subsidised treatment for acute conditions at private general practitioner clinics – to management of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) to help decongest public health care facilities.

Selayang MP William Leong has described “patient rage” against doctors and nurses as a “big problem”, urging the public to understand staff constraints in government hospitals and to avoid taking out their frustrations on health care professionals in the emergency unit.