

MOH Orders Over 1,000 Contract Doctors To Resign Before Accepting Permanent Posts

By Boo Su-Lyn | 4 December 2023

MOH has ordered over 1,000 UD43 contract medical officers in the latest cohort to resign, effective on Dec 18, when they report for duty as permanent appointments. Matters concerning contract service cannot arise after the “irrevocable” resignation notice.



Medical officers (in long-sleeved collared shirts), medical assistants (in light green), and nurses (in purple) handling patients and other tasks at Melaka Hospital's emergency and trauma department (Red Zone). Photo by Saw Siow Feng, taken on June 26, 2023.

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 4 – The Health Ministry has instructed more than 1,000 contract medical officers to quit public service before reporting for duty in permanent positions next December 18.

According to a circular dated last November 2 by the Ministry of Health's (MOH) Human Resource Division (BSM) – which was shared by the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) with

the media – the Public Services Commission (SPA) approved, last October 2, the permanent appointments of 1,226 UD43 contract doctors as UD43 medical officers that would take effect on December 18.

A total of 1,004 contract doctors, who were approved for permanent appointments in the latest cohort, chose their placements as of last October 31, while 37 medical officers, or 3 per cent, did not.

“Officers who accepted permanent appointments must tender a notice of resignation as a UD43 contract medical officer, effective on the date of reporting for duty, which is December 18, 2023, to their original head of department,” BSM said in its November 2 circular to state health directors and deputy directors (medical), as well as the directors of four hospitals in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya.

“With the date of effect of the resignation notice for this [contract] position, officers will be required to report for duty and serve in the set placement.

“For your information, resignation notices will be irrevocable after taking effect and whatever matters related to the officer’s service under contract can no longer arise after resignation.”

BSM added that heads of departments must ensure that contract medical officers do not retract their resignation notice after taking effect or permit them to report for duty after quitting as contract officers.

“Any application on the need to postpone reporting for duty is subject to approval by the officer’s new head of department. Officers must be informed that postponement of reporting for duty will cause implications on the date of effect of the permanent appointment.

“If reporting for duty is postponed, the date of effect of the resignation notice must also be amended to be in line with the date of the officer reporting for duty as a permanent appointment.”

BSM also reminded the original department heads supervising contract doctors, who received permanent appointments, to inform medical officers that all civil servants are subject to the [Public Officers \(Conduct and Discipline\) Regulations 1993](#), including Regulation 4(2)(h):

“An officer shall not bring or attempt to bring any form of outside influence or pressure to support or advance any claim relating to or against the public service, whether the claim is his own claim or that of any other officer.”

As for the new heads of department of contract doctors appointed to permanent posts, they are required to set the starting salary of these UD43 medical officers based on the last salary received in the officer’s last contract, which is at grade UD43.

BSM’s November 2 circular is surprising, considering that the [Public Service Department \(JPA\) previously issued a circular](#) to announce that all contract officers in government, including health care workers under the MOH, would be eligible to claim for interstate transfer expenses from last October 9.

Before this, contract medical, dental, and pharmacy officers who received permanent positions could not claim for the costs of transfers to their new location because [BSM deemed that the period of the officer’s service was disrupted from contract to permanent](#).

Some government doctors, who were previously involved in the July 31 relocation of more than 4,100 contract medical officers nationwide for permanent appointments, had to pawn gold and make Amanah Saham Bumiputera (ASB) withdrawals to fund their interstate transfers.

It is unclear what triggered this major human resource policy under Health Minister Dr Zaliha Mustafa that appears to be the government's attempt for a clean break, so to say, from all contract doctor issues, by forcing contract medical officers to resign before they can join the public service afresh as permanent hires.

When asked how the impact of the new requirement for resignations differed from the government's previous consideration that a medical officer's service is "disrupted" from contract to permanent, MMA president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz expressed uncertainty. The contract system was created in 2016.

"This has not been done before. The MMA also wants clarification on the reason for it," she told *CodeBlue*.

BSM's circular did not state if offer letters must be provided to contract doctors for permanent appointments *before* the date of their resignation as contract officers. Previously, even if offer letters were sent late – after a medical officer reports for duty in a permanent position – that officer would still be (technically) employed until the end of their contract.

But demanding resignations now means that contract doctors will be forced to rely on the good faith of the government to go through with the permanent appointments – without an official offer letter.

MMA Raises Issues Of Reimbursement, Recognition Of Service, Resignation, And Rewards



Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz. Photo courtesy of MMA.

Dr Azizan complained that the health minister's office did not respond to MMA's multiple requests for an explanation of BSM's latest circular since nearly a month ago on November 9.

“Doctors are still not allowed to claim transport and cargo allowance – with the excuse being that they are ‘between contracts’; when in reality they work throughout the entire duration. Surely semantics and bureaucracy is less important than the welfare of doctors?” the MMA president said in a statement last Thursday.

The country’s largest doctors’ association also pointed out that with the latest circular, the years served as a contract doctor are not recognised for salary grades and promotion.

“This raises the issue of unfairness as doctors that serve the same total number of years will be paid differently depending on the date of promotion to permanent positions.

“The issue of doctors that are the same grade regardless of duration of completion of house officer training is still unsolved (HO [house officer] becomes MO [medical officer] after two years, but pay grade remains the same for the third year). Again the excuse of red tape and bureaucracy is raised.”

MMA said the MOH’s new requirement for contract doctors to tender their resignation before reporting for duty as permanent appointments in the latest cohort may affect medical officers’ existing years of service.

“A medical officer needs three years of *Sasaran Kerja Tahunan* (SKT) to qualify to apply for study leave and specialist training.”

Dr Azizan noted that a number of UD43 medical officers are sponsored under Public Service Department (JPA) scholarships, as she requested that the terms and arrangements for the settlement of their study loans will remain under the existing scheme.

“The cohort’s *Gantian Cuti Rehat* (GCR) should also be carried forward and continue from 18th December – the date they report for duty as a permanent medical officer.”

MMA also told the MOH to expedite the settlement of the balance contract rewards that have yet to be sped up by the hospitals contract medical officers are currently serving in.

“It is also hoped that all contract doctors in this cohort and in future placement exercises will receive their offer letter stating their basic salary and allowances they are entitled to at least three months before the date they are expected to tender their notice of resignation.

“Lastly, a change of workplace, especially when it involves shifting to another state, requires time for planning and financial arrangements to facilitate,” Dr Azizan said. “We therefore appeal to the MOH for flexibility in allowing sufficient leave to make the necessary arrangements to relocate.”