

# No 'exodus' of young doctors to Singapore likely

By **Samuel Chua** - October 27, 2021 7:00 AM

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A Singapore hospital group has recently advertised for medical officers from Malaysia to work on a contract basis because of the rise in Covid-19 cases there. (AP pic)

PETALING JAYA: Although there might be some takers, it is unlikely that a significant number of medical officers (MOs) will leave for Singapore to work in Covid-19 care centres, say health experts.

Faced with an increasing number of Covid-19 cases, a hospital group in the republic recently sent out a message on social media inviting MOs from Malaysia to work there on a contract basis.

Besides a "reasonably attractive" salary, the advertiser said all necessary documents required for Malaysian doctors to be employed in Singapore would be fast-tracked.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Koh Kar Chai said MOs who would like to take up the offer would first have to resign from the health ministry.



Dr Koh Kar Chai.

"By doing so, they will not be able to return to the health ministry's employment again," he told FMT.

"Those who wish to specialise will find that their career advancement will be jeopardised by this move unless they have plans to pursue their specialisation elsewhere."

Koh said only those who had fulfilled the compulsory four years' service with the ministry and were planning to leave public service might find the offer beneficial as he or she could move to Singapore for temporary employment and, at the same time, contemplate private primary care practice.

He said the move to employ graduates from Singapore would be attractive if the country offered Malaysians entry into their postgraduate programmes.

"If Singapore were to offer an extended contract on a renewable basis, more Malaysian MOs will be enticed to join," he said.

"The icing on the cake will be if Singapore offers Malaysian doctors entry into their postgraduate programmes. However, it is highly unlikely for them to do so."

Asked what the government should do to circumvent this matter, Koh said the issue of contract doctors had to be settled as soon as possible.

Federation of Private Medical Practitioners' Associations Malaysia (FPMPAM) president Dr Steven Chow agreed that only a few MOs would consider leaving for Singapore.

He said Malaysia produced doctors "by the thousands" each year and a country like Singapore would not be able to absorb that many into their system.

In terms of whether their prospects for job advancement would be better, Chow said this was possible but the Singapore government would still put their focus (on career advancement) on their citizens and permanent residents.

To prevent a brain drain of MOs and doctors, he said, the government should prioritise recruiting quality doctors and reward them based on their performance.



Dr Steven Chow.

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