

# After bullying claims, Teresa Kok moots counselling care for govt physicians' mental health

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BY IDA LIM



Teresa Kok suggests the Health Ministry set up therapy and counselling units for medical officers to avoid a repeat of the tragic death of a trainee doctor in Penang. — File picture by Choo Choy May

KUALA LUMPUR, May 7 — The Health Ministry should set up therapy and counselling units in all government hospitals for medical officers to avoid a repeat of the tragic death of a trainee doctor in Penang, Seputeh MP Teresa Kok said today.

While applauding the Health Ministry's move to [set up an independent task force to investigate the trainee doctor's death and allegations of a bullying culture](#), the Opposition lawmaker said it was more important for the ministry to seriously look into the mental health of medical officers at government hospitals.

She noted that since the Penang Hospital incident, many doctors have shared their personal experiences during their housemanship on social media, including how they struggling with mental pressure and depression.

“At the same time, aggressive behaviour or bullying attitude by some of the senior medical officers towards trainee doctors in hospitals also showed that these senior doctors have behavioural problems and need psychological guidance.

“I propose the Health Ministry set up a therapy and counselling unit in all government hospitals to help medical officers facing overwork, mental stress and emotional problems,” she said in a statement.

She added that such units would show the Home Ministry’s commitment towards mental health issues as seen in the National Mental Health Strategic Plan 2020-2025.

In a separate statement today, Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Koh Kar Chai suggested the task force “should look into the whole training system and other causes of stress related to work”, which he said is seen among both trainee doctors and senior officers.

“MMA has worked with MOH throughout the years to look at the grouses among the healthcare personnel and there had been progress on this. We cannot deny that some cases of bullying have not been resolved satisfactorily and therefore an independent body will be useful in such cases,” he said.

The Penang Health Department confirmed earlier this week that a trainee doctor fell to death on April 17 after just three weeks of housemanship at the state general hospital, stirring speculation that it was triggered by pressure and bullying.

Hartal Doktor Kontrak, the movement that sprung up to represent junior doctors seeking permanent placements, has claimed that bullying of housemen is not a new phenomenon.

Some of the accounts by healthcare personnel — including by those who posted directly on Twitter — included thoughts of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

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