

# MMA: Comprehensive policy should be enforced to curb bullying in healthcare sector

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*The Malaysian Medical Association hopes a comprehensive policy will be enforced to curb bullying in the healthcare sector following the report by the Healthcare Work Culture Improvement Task Force (HWCITF) today. - File pic (For illustration purposes only)*

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association hopes a comprehensive policy will be enforced to curb bullying in the healthcare sector following the report by the Healthcare Work Culture Improvement Task Force (HWCITF) today.

Its president, Dr Koh Kar Chai, said through the findings by the taskforce, measures and recommendations to stop the bullying culture could be effectively implemented.

"Although more than 60 per cent of the respondents described the work culture in the Health Ministry as 'positive', incidences of reported bullying would still take place due to various causative factors no matter the percentage.

"MMA had previously highlighted the need to look after the welfare of all healthcare workers, not only doctors. If the healthcare workers are themselves not taken care of, how are we to expect them to give their best in patient care?

"It is also not a matter of hiring more healthcare workers as this may not make a medical career less challenging. Working in the healthcare sector where we are faced with life-and-death situations is definitely stressful, whether one is a junior or a senior doctor," he told the New Straits Times today.

Dr Koh added that continuous monitoring of the bullying culture needed to be done through the 10 recommendations suggested by HWCITF to improve the quality of work culture among medical officers.

"It is not about whether these 10 recommendations are enough, but rather how many of these can be taken up and implemented as bullying is not only among the houseman but at other levels as well in the ministry.

"MMA's Help Doc which was set up in 2017 to report issues and incidents of bullying will be useful as an independent platform for doctors to report any incidents of bullying. What we need is more awareness for it to be fully utilised by those affected.

"The work culture and environment in government healthcare should be looked into for improvement and professional conduct should also include respect among colleagues," he said.

Today, HWCITF reported that it found no element of bullying that allegedly caused the death of the houseman in Penang Hospital earlier this year.

Taskforce chairman Professor Datuk Dr Siti Hamisah Tapsir said based on its findings, there was no "strong evidence" that connected the death to alleged bullying at the workplace.

The task force also presented 10 recommendations, which include setting up a Medical Qualifying Committee, houseman candidate screening, standardisation for housemanship training, and improving the E-Houseman system.

A total of 110,411 respondents, which included Health Ministry officers and staff, had participated in the survey, nearly half of the total workforce in the ministry.