

MMA Polling Government Doctors On Antibiotic Shortage In Public Hospitals

By CodeBlue | 13 September 2022

This is the first recently reported problem of a medicine shortage in the public sector; previous drug supply disruptions were mainly in private clinics, pharmacies, and hospitals.



Waiting to pickup medicines from the specialist clinics' pharmacy counter at Serdang Hospital, Selangor, a Ministry of Health public healthcare facility. CREDIT: CodeBlue

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 13 – The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has launched a survey for government doctors on a reported recent shortage of antibiotics in government hospitals.

MMA's Schomos section – which represents housemen, medical officers, and specialists in the public health care sector – said that the online poll aims to evaluate the supply of antibiotics and to push for a more reliable and constant supply to prevent the compromise of patient care.

“Shortage is defined as the lack of supply even for ONE SINGLE prescribed dose,” said MMA Schomos’ survey, as sighted by *CodeBlue*.

The survey, which is only for government doctors across medical specialties, includes questions on whether respondents experienced antibiotic shortage in the past one year, the frequency of shortages per year, when the shortage of antibiotics became a problem, the duration of the antibiotic shortage, and the type or brands of antibiotics that have run out.

Respondents are also asked about the appropriateness of alternative antibiotics prescribed, based on the 2019 Malaysian Antibiotic Guidelines and their own clinical experience, as well as whether the shortage of antibiotics affected the care of their patients.

Other questions include the type of adverse outcome, based on respondents’ clinical judgment, resulting from the shortage of antibiotics, such as prolonged hospital stay, deterioration of the patient’s condition, patient’s death, increased incidence of antibiotic resistance, waste of resources by prescribing alternative antibiotics, and increased side effects due to alternative antibiotics.

Respondents are also asked if they believe that the shortage of antibiotics was due to a lack of their hospital or department budget, poor planning by their hospital or department, or shortage from main suppliers.

This appears to be the first recently reported medicine shortage problem in the public sector, as previous reports mainly revolved around disruptions of drug supply in the private sector, affecting general practitioner (GP) clinics, community pharmacies, and private hospitals.

Last July 15, [Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin announced](#) that he has instructed the Ministry of Health (MOH) to open up its federal medicine stockpile, amid persistent drug shortages in private health care facilities.

Last June, *CodeBlue* reported that [local pharmaceutical suppliers](#) attributed Malaysia’s medicine shortages to the recent China shutdowns and the Russia-Ukraine war that exacerbated

global supply challenges sparked by prolonged global lockdowns during the past two years of the pandemic, amid a surge of local and global demand as countries reopened this year.

The most common major shortages reported then by pharmaceutical suppliers, doctors, and pharmacists were of various prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medications, including syrups for children and treatments for chronic conditions.