

# MMA: Screen students taking up medical studies, career

By [Adib Povera](#), [Hana Naz Harun](#) - May 10, 2022 @ 4:21pm



KUALA LUMPUR 10 MEI 2022. President of Malaysia Medical Association (MMA), Dr. Koh Kar Chai during the press conference of the bully incidence in the healthcare sector at the Malaysia Medical Association (MMA) headquarter in Kuala Lumpur. -NSTP/AIZUDDIN SAAD

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has proposed that prospective students seeking to further their studies in medicine should be subjected to a screening test.

Its president Dr Koh Kar Chai said such a screening would determine their suitability and prepare them for the hardships of being medical practitioners.

Stressing that being a medical practitioner was not a bed of roses, he said the proposal was not something new and has been around for sometime.

He said the MoH needs to put in place such a screening test to enable only the right students to pursue studies in medicine.

"There must be a screening process to determine whether the prospective student is suitable to take the course (medical)," he said in a press conference, here today.

Dr Koh added that to further ensure fresh graduates are suitable for a career in medicine they must also be subjected to a common examination.

"They also need to take the Unified Examination because not everyone has the same level," he said.

Dr Koh said such a move would also ensure all medical graduates will start "on the same level ground" when they begin their housemanship as required by the Medical Act 1971.

This was among the suggestions raised by MMA to reduce pressure on the public healthcare system, eliminate bullying against junior health professionals and avoid recurrence of last month's tragedy that befell a trainee doctor.

"For many years, we have been talking about the unified examination which we want to have when these graduates come out of school.

"This is to ensure that everybody (fresh medical graduates) will start at the same level when they start their period of housemanship," he told reporters here today.

Dr Koh said MMA had repeatedly called to address issues faced not only by housemen but also by the welfare of doctors in the public healthcare sector.

"This isn't just about housemen alone but about the huge mental burden placed on the shoulders of all doctors," he said.

When asked to comment on the feedback from the ministry over the proposal, Dr Koh replied: "Even if there is progress, there have been changes in the government for so many times.

"The top leaders in KKM (the Health Ministry) have been changing as well. Therefore, we need to bring up the matter again."

Meanwhile, Dr Koh said there was no "real necessity" to revamp the healthcare training programme, describing the housemanship programme as "quite good".

He said students should instead look into their suitability before embarking on a medical career, while parents should be more aware of the hardships before subjecting their children to a medical course and career.

"Young ones should be allowed to make their own choice. There will be immense stress exerted on a child who has no intention of going into a medical career.

"The long hours during the medical course and the huge financial expenses will always be on the minds of the students.

"The additional stress that will be heaped on them during the houseman training period may just be the straw that will break their back."

Dr Koh also pointed out that there was a high attrition rate of at least 26 per cent among housemen.

However, he said this should not be the reason to simplify houseman training, or for reduced hours, see less patients or assist in fewer procedures to lessen the perceived hardships faced by these medical officers.

"What will happen then when they move on to be junior medical officers who are fully registered as competent doctors? Will they then be able to manage patients on their own?

"There will be long hours of work when they face the never ending queue of patients needing their care for which they were never prepared for," he added.

He urged the Health Ministry to plan a mechanism to manage the large number of doctors undergoing training, and also called on the ministry to look into all factors contributing to the issues faced by housemen in their training, including the welfare of doctors in the public healthcare system.