

Over 35 bullying cases reported through HelpDoc since 2017, says MMA

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KUALA LUMPUR: A total of 36 bullying cases have been received through the HelpDoc complaint line since it was launched in 2017, says the Malaysian Medical Association.

Its president, Dr Koh Kar Chai said the figure was out of the 120 cases reported through the hotline.

HelpDoc was set up to give assistance to doctors to report bullying cases without the fear of being reprimanded.

"There were about 120 cases reported through the hotline and 36 of them involved bullying while further breakdown includes work complaint, career growth issues and posting and transfer issues among others," he said to the media on Tuesday (May 10).

Dr Koh explained that the cases will be reported and dealt with including physical assault cases which will be transferred to the MMA representative within its vicinity.

"We know there is a culture of fear where whenever certain officers speak out about another, they will be reprimanded.

"This is something we really need to look at because not only house officers experience this but medical officers and consultants as well so we are having regular dialogues with the health ministry to rectify this," he said.

He added that a medical career is stressful and help is readily available in the respective hospitals as a specific unit with trained counsellors and psychiatrists.

"Stress management for doctors is available in hospitals, we have a unit with counsellors and psychiatrists where they can go if they have issues.

"These units have regular engagement with doctors and the doctors can approach the counsellors themselves if they are stressed," he said.

However, he added that junior doctors are still reluctant to approach the unit for fear of being stigmatised and tainting their key performance indicator (KPI) for not being able to cope with such stress.

Dr Koh stressed that doctors should refrain from using harsh words while on duty even when they are under high levels of stress.

"Don't be misled by the constant complaints by those who clamour for the easy life of a doctor as life as a medical practitioner is never easy and one has to be fully prepared for the challenges," he said.

Commenting on the training of house officers, Dr Koh said that no reform is needed as the training is already good enough but they must look at the stress levels of doctors who are imparting their knowledge to the trainees.

A houseman in Penang Hospital had recently fallen to his death from his residential building.

On May 4, the Penang Health Department confirmed that a graduate medical officer fell from the building on April 17 and said this was being investigated. He had been stationed at the Penang Hospital since April 4.

A housemanship in Malaysia is an internship that all medical graduates go through before becoming full-fledged doctors.

As spelt out in the 2019 Guidebook on House Officers, housemen must serve under several medical disciplines such as surgery, obstetrics and paediatrics.

Each discipline should not exceed 12 months and the total internship time should not exceed six years, but in practice, the time frame can vary from 18 to 24 months.