

Table amendments to Act 50 quickly, govt urged

PETALING JAYA: On the issue of the shortage of specialists in the healthcare system, the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) says the government must not delay the tabling of the proposed amendments to the Medical Act 1971 (Act 50) in the upcoming Dewan Rakyat meeting.

Its president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz said there must also be a master plan on the number of healthcare personnel needed, including specialists.

She said the plan also had to include a timeline towards achieving the targeted milestones.

“The shortage in specialists is not a new problem, with MMA bringing this issue up years ago.

“It is also evident in the long wait to see specialists in most of our public healthcare facilities,” she said when contacted.

Dr Azizan said many were on the waiting list for life-saving procedures, which include heart patients awaiting bypass surgery, as a result of the shortage.

“Many have to wait up to a year, and these long waits can significantly impact outcomes,” she said.



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Dr Azizan pointed out how Malaysia was approaching an ageing-nation status, where there will be a significantly higher population of older people.

“The demand for specialist care is already rapidly increasing due to this.

“Specialist training also requires time and this is one of the reasons why the MMA has been emphasising the importance of public healthcare human resources planning,” she said.

On April 2, Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said the ministry will propose to the Cabinet to expedite the proposed amendments to amend the Medical Act 1971 (Act 50) by the next Parliament sitting in June.

Pending the Cabinet’s decision on the proposed amendments to Act 50, Dzulkefly said the ministry will strive to ensure that those who have successfully completed their training under the Parallel Pathway Programme (PPP) will be eligible for registration as specialists under this Act.

The Act requires a registered medical practitioner to be registered with the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC).

The MMC is also the sole authority to determine which doctor can become a specialist and has the power to recognise specialist qualifications.

The Star recently reported that MMC refused to recognise the Fellowships of four Malaysian heart and lung trainee surgeons from the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (RCSEd) despite them passing their examinations under the PPP.

There are only 14 heart and lung surgeons in public service now and several are retiring in a few years, while there are over 1,500 heart and lung disease patients urgently needing surgery.

In response, MMC president Datuk Dr Muhammad Radzi Abu Hassan said the council was not against any of the programmes in the PPP, adding that its interest is in ensuring that the training programmes conducted in the country fulfil the relevant legal and statutory requirements.

He also denied that the RCSEd in Cardiothoracic Surgery was at any time recognised by the MMC.

“However, the MMC takes note of the issues pertaining to registration of graduates of this programme and has set up a task force with a view to arriving at a resolution of the issues as quickly as possible,” said Dr Muhammad Radzi, who is also the Health director-general.

Several doctors have also taken the MMC to court in relation to the regulator’s refusal to recognise their qualification.

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