



## Press Statement

### “Further Clarification Needed on the Discontinuation of Scholarships for Medical-Related Programmes”

**15th April 2023** - We are deeply concerned regarding the official statement released by the Public Service Department (PSD), or better known as *Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA)*, to cease scholarships for medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing and para-medical programmes for the year 2023.

While this may have been regarded as a drastic measure to manage the surge of medical graduates in recent years, abruptly halting the scholarship may not provide the solution.<sup>2</sup> This decision will undoubtedly impact the near and long-term future of the healthcare sector in Malaysia by reducing the interest in medical-related programmes. We call upon the Public Service Department, other relevant stakeholders and distinguished policymakers to consider the following:

**1. Clarify the implementation of the current plan**

The decision to discontinue sponsoring students in local universities intending to study medical-related programmes was sudden and without any thorough explanation provided. Therefore, MMI urges the PSD to provide more information on this decision by disclosing their rationales to the public. For some individuals, they may have been discouraged and dissuaded from pursuing the health professions as this scholarship may have been their only means of funding their studies. In the long run, this may compromise the quality of healthcare professionals as potential candidates might be deterred due to personal financial constraints. We call upon the Malaysian government to acknowledge the significance of investing in these programmes to ensure that the healthcare needs of the country are met.

**2. Review policies on human resource planning in the healthcare sector**

MMI calls upon the PSD to provide insights and details on its projection of healthcare professionals in the next five years; thus, allowing policymakers to review policies on human resource planning and tailor them to current healthcare needs whilst taking population growth into consideration.<sup>2</sup> The shortage of healthcare professionals, particularly specialists, in our country remains a pressing issue that has yet to be adequately addressed. Despite recommendations in The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016 - 2020) to achieve a 1:400 doctor-to-patient ratio in public healthcare facilities, this target has not yet been met.<sup>3</sup> According to a written reply in the Dewan Rakyat last month by Health Minister, Dr. Zaliha Mustafa, data from the Ministry of Health (MoH) indicated that only 62 percent of House Officer positions have been occupied, attributed to House Officer not completing their training, resigning from their posts or termination.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a reduction of qualified and skilled healthcare professionals in the future can be anticipated with the cease of scholarship.

In conclusion, we urge the Public Service Department to take immediate consideration of the aforementioned issues and revise the decision of scholarship suspension. Although it may offer a temporary solution to any pre-existing issues, we may see a deterioration of the public health sector in the near future if this scenario were to persist.

As medical students, we are devoted to serving the *rakyat*. Therefore, we implore the stakeholders to strive towards establishing a conducive environment that nurtures the growth and development of healthcare professionals in Malaysia.

Thank you.

## **MALAYSIAN MEDICS INTERNATIONAL**

### **TERM 2022/2023**

#### **About Malaysian Medics International (MMI)**

MMI is an international medical student-led organisation that aims to connect, educate, and cultivate. Since our inception in 2013, we have grown into a global network of more than 200 leaders from seven countries around the world. Presently, we are an active advocate for inclusivity and diversity, reform in medical education, and the welfare of our junior doctors and medical students.

**Website:** [malaysianmedics.org](https://malaysianmedics.org)

**Email:** [admin@malaysianmedics.org](mailto:admin@malaysianmedics.org)

#### **References**

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3. Ministry of Health (MoH) Malaysia. Strategic Framework of the Medical Programme, Ministry of Health Malaysia (2021 - 2025). Putrajaya: Hospital Management Unit, Medical Development Division, MoH; 2020.
4. CodeBlue. MOH Reveals Only 62% Of Housemen Positions Filled [Internet]. Kuala Lumpur: CodeBlue; 2023 [updated 2023 Feb 16; cited 2023 Apr 4]. Available from: <https://codeblue.galencentre.org/2023/02/16/moh-reveals-only-62-of-housemen-positions-filled/>

This press statement is endorsed by



**Malaysian Pharmacy Students' Association (MyPSA)**



**Malaysian Dental Students' Association (MDSA)**



**AMSA MALAYSIA**  
Asian Medical Students' Association

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