



PRESS STATEMENT

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN MEDICAL SCHOOLS

The Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) wishes to refer to the comments made by the President-elect of the Malaysian Physicians for Social Responsibility (MPSR) and President of the Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) which were respectively reported in The Star on 3rd and 12th March 2016. The Malaysian Medical Council, as the statutory body empowered by the Medical Act of 1971, regulates the standard of medical practice in the country by ensuring that only those with the proper qualifications are registered as medical practitioners and by regulating the practice of medical practitioners through its code of professional conduct and other guidelines.

The Council is aware of the issues raised by MPSR and MMA including Malaysian graduates from foreign universities without minimal entry qualifications, the poor performance of many of the younger doctors who graduated from certain overseas universities and the long waiting time for graduates to commence their housemanship training.

The minimal entry qualifications for any undergraduate course including professional courses such as the medical course are determined by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The council gives its input to MOHE and have recently suggested a more stringent entry requirement for the medical course, but the final decision rests with MOHE as provided for under the law. The MMC is able to monitor whether local universities have taken students without minimal qualifications through the periodic accreditation visits to all the universities which it conducts on behalf of the Malaysian Qualification Agency (MQA), a government agency tasked with ensuring quality assurance of higher education. The MQA will take the necessary action if the accreditation panels from MMC find any issues with minimal entry qualifications.

MMC, however, does not have the authority to regulate entry into Medical courses in overseas universities. In the past, students who wish to pursue medical courses overseas were required to take a “No Objection Certificate” from the MOHE and the issuance of such certificates would be based on the students having the same minimal entry qualifications as stipulated for entry to local universities. Many of the foreign universities have ignored the NOC and taken students with lesser qualifications or they have circumvented the requirement by conducting their own foundation courses. The foundation programmes, many of dubious standards, are supposed to prepare students with lesser qualifications to undertake the medical course.

The issue of inadequate housemanship places is being addressed by the Ministry of Health and other government agencies. The current provisions of the Medical Act 1971 require a person to be employed in a resident medical capacity before he is given provisional registration. This has created a major challenge for the MOH to find posts for the increasing number of graduates.

MMC and MOH are aware of the deteriorating standards of graduates of a number of **foreign universities**. A study by the MOH has shown that a significant number of house officers have had their postings extended or repeated as their performance were below par. Apart from not having met the minimal entry requirements, other factors noted included the quality of medical education of the universities and the curriculum of certain universities that limit the student’s exposure to clinical experience, which is so essential in medical training.

MMC would like to assure all parties that the Council is fully aware of these issues and is taking a number of steps to address them:

1. Under the Medical Act 1971, MMC recognises qualifications of over 350 Universities throughout the world (listed under the Second Schedule of the Act) and graduates from these Universities are given provisional registration. These Universities were listed in the 1970s and many have changed status and we have no information on many of them. The council has decided to remove a number of Universities from this list after attempts to contact them have failed.
2. Graduates from Universities **not listed in the second schedule** have to sit for a Qualifying examination as provided for in the Medical Act. This has been the practice. The examination will be conducted by the Council with the assistance of the local medical schools. New rules

have been put in place to ensure that those who passed have sufficient knowledge and skills to practice.

3. MMC will continue to appraise the standards of medical education and recommend to MOHE and MQA, measures to improve the quality of medical education.

Additionally, looking into the future, MMC is considering various measures to further enhance the standard of medical practice in the country. Some of these measures may require amendments to the Medical Act and some others can be done administratively. One major proposal that is being discussed within the Council is to make all graduates from foreign medical schools sit for a licensing examination before they are granted registration in the country. **This is the practice of many countries now.** To name a few, the General Medical Council of the UK has the PLAB (Professional and Language Assessment Board) examination, and the USA has the USMLE (United States Medical Licensing Examination). This will ensure that all medical practitioners who wish to practice in the country meet a certain standard.

Thank you

DATUK DR. NOOR HISHAM ABDULLAH
Director-General of Health Malaysia and
President, Malaysian Medical Council.

15 March 2016