



PRESS STATEMENT
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

SPECIALIST TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MOH DOCTORS

1. The Ministry of Health (MOH) would like to refer to letters published in The Star on 22nd, 23rd and 24th March 2016 titled 'Give more doctors chance to be specialists', 'Budget for critical areas must not be reduced' and 'Health Ministry must get priorities right'.
2. MOH appreciates the concerns raised by the writers with regards to the issues and challenges related to specialist training programmes. Hence, MOH wishes to reassure the public and healthcare professionals alike that despite the uncertain economic times, MOH has never reduced any scholarship slots for the specialist training programme. As a matter of fact, the number of scholarships for the local Masters Programme has increased from only 450 in 2007 to 800 slots for the the 2011/ 2012 sessions, and up to 916 slots in 2015. For 2016, there are 1129 slots available in the local Masters Programme with 998 qualified Medical Officers (MOs) have been offered to pursue their specialist training. MOH will appeal to the universities to allow the remaining 131 MOs who did not qualify earlier to be given a chance for reassessment by the respective universities.
3. Alternatively, MOs who are unable to enter the local Masters Programme, or those that wish to opt for other postgraduate programmes, may also pursue specialist training via parallel pathways such as the UK Membership Programmes, of which part of the exams are conducted **locally in Malaysia**. Examples of Membership Programmes that have been implemented in Malaysia are:
 - i. Member of the Royal College of Physicians (MRCP), UK
 - ii. Member of the Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health (MRCPCH), UK

- iii. Member of the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (MRCOG), UK
 - iv. Member of the Royal College of Surgeons (MRCS) and Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons (FRCS), UK. However, MRCS is the prerequisite requirement to undertake FRCS for specialist recognition in Malaysia.
4. MOH will continue to explore various strategies to increase the number of specialists. Apart from a notable increase in scholarships offered and strengthening of the parallel pathway, MOH is also making efforts through various steps such as:
- i. Appointment of specialist doctors from private health facilities on a sessional basis.
 - ii. Reappointment of selected senior MOH clinical consultants that have retired, on a contractual basis.
 - iii. Appointment of selected foreign clinical specialists or subspecialists for very critical health service or areas.
 - iv. Encouraging local specialist doctors who are working overseas to return home and give service to the country, not only in public sectors.
5. It is worth noting that there is no country in the world that does not face a shortage of specialist doctors for their nation's needs, including Malaysia. MOH has continuously strived to improve the number of specialist doctors, especially within MOH facilities. It is hoped that more specialists will be produced to ensure that there is equitable public access to comprehensive and quality specialty health services throughout the country at an affordable cost.

Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah
Director-General of Health Malaysia
25th March 2016