

Race to relieve ER overcrowding

Healthcare facilities given three months to draw up plan to tackle issue

PETALING JAYA: Healthcare facilities under the Health Ministry have been instructed to prepare a concrete plan to manage overcrowding at emergency departments within three months.

“Each facility shall prepare a written implementation action plan within three months from the date of this letter.

“State Health Departments shall be responsible for monitoring the implementation within their respective facilities and conducting periodic audits to ensure operational effectiveness and sustainability,” Health director-general Datuk Dr Mahathar Abd Wahab said in a circular dated June 4 sighted by *The Star*.

He said the Emergency and Trauma Department (ETD), as the primary gateway to hospital wards, faces recurring and systemic overcrowding issues each year.

He said a stronger holistic approach is needed as managing overcrowding is not solely the ETD’s responsibility, adding that it is a shared responsibility involving various services and departments within healthcare facilities.

“The Health Ministry views this matter with utmost seriousness and has designated it as one of the key initiatives under the Minister

of Health’s transformation agenda during the MOH Leadership Retreat on Jan 12-13,” he said.

The matter was subsequently refined through the MOH Strategic Planning Workshop and the Patient Flow and Movement Management Workshop, involving various stakeholders at the headquarters, state Health Departments, hospitals and health clinics, with the objective of formulating comprehensive and holistic policy actions, he added.

He said improvements to patient flow and movement management, revolving around patient-centred care, must be implemented comprehensively across the patient journey from patient arrival (input) and treatment processes (throughput) to and post-treatment care (output).

This includes strengthening input by enhancing access, triage, referral systems and healthcare system capacity to ensure services are delivered efficiently and in an integrated manner.

Optimising throughput involves improving internal hospital processes and treatment pathways, including interdepartmental coordination, bed management, patient flow from the ETD to ward admission, discharge manage-

KPI Targets		
Parameters	Operation definition	Target
Wait time at Specialist Clinic	The time taken for patients with an appointment to see the doctor	Less than 90 minutes
Length of stay at Emergency Department	Duration of stay at emergency department from arrival to disposition	Less than 6 hours
Vacating bed after discharge	Time taken for patient to leave the ward after discharge	Less than 4 hours

ment, as well as enhancing output by strengthening continuity of care through effective appointment management, virtual follow-ups, stepping up engagements with transport providers,

and providing training to manage patients and outpatient parenteral antibiotic therapy.

The guidelines attached to the circular highlighted the need to expand the use of digital triage

systems, standardising referral criteria and enhancing triage functions across both ETD and primary healthcare facilities.

Low-risk patients are to be managed at health clinics, while high-risk cases requiring admission should be directly referred to hospital wards.

Access to primary healthcare should be improved through expansion of extended hours services at health clinics, particularly in high-demand areas.

This should be supported by strengthening existing EH services, improving laboratory capabilities, deploying health clinic personnel to hospitals where appropriate, and increasing public awareness of available after-hours healthcare services.

Selected health clinics should be upgraded to Integrated Health Clinics with enhanced diagnostic capabilities, including X-ray and laboratory services, to reduce pressure on nearby hospitals.

Direct admission processes from health clinics to hospital wards should also be streamlined through clear policies, standardised clinical guidelines and collaboration between family medicine specialists and hospital-based specialists.

Tough times call for urgent measures at hospitals

PETALING JAYA: Hospital Pekan in Pahang needs 80 medical officers (MO), but it has just over 50 as of June 1.

It is one of several government facilities that have been grappling with a manpower crunch this month.

As such, it has drawn up a contingency plan, noting that Hospital Tengku Ampuan Afzan (HTAA) in Kuantan, 45km away, had deployed MOs to Pekan on June 3.

In a notice signed by the hospital director, it said that on average, each MO is required to take up eight to 10 active on-call duties and active general pool on-call duties (inter-facility transfers) per month "as the current number of MO remains insufficient to meet service demands".

A task force meeting was held on May 22 among the departments and clinical units to discuss measures such as having a pooled on-call system for medical and surgical-based disciplines, whereby the number of active on-call duties and active general pool on-call duties (inter-facility transfers) will be reduced to about five to six duties a month.

Hospital Pekan will only focus on elective surgical procedures, while emergency surgical cases within the General Surgery,



Crunch time

Segamat Hospital (Johor)

- Temporary postponement of selected Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) referrals
- State Health Department finalising arrangements to ensure continuous effective healthcare services

Lahad Datu Hospital (Sabah)

- Only four medical officers to support services in ICU, ventilation, operating theatres, and anaesthesiology.
- State Health Department arranging for redeployment of MOs from cluster hospitals in Kota Kinabalu and Tawau

Raja Permaisuri Bainun Hospital (Perak)

- Long wait at Perak's only cardiac centre
- Restructuring of cardiology services



The Star graphics

Source: Various

Orthopaedics and Obstetrics & Gynaecology (O&G) disciplines presented after office hours will be referred to HTAA.

All elective procedures under "plastic surgery and otorhinolaryngology" will also be postponed.

The Star has learnt that Hospital Pekan requires 80 MOs, but it currently has 54 as only 70 positions had been filled.

Aside from that, 19 officers were scholars pursuing higher education under the Hadiah Latihan Persekutuan (Federal Training Award).

These scholars come under a government-funded programme that supports doctors pursuing full-time specialist training while remaining in active service.

Acknowledging the manpower crunch, the Pahang health department (JKNP) said in a statement on June 10 that there are currently 850 MOs serving in the state.

"A review has found that the shortage of MOs in several facilities is attributable to a number of

factors, including the movement of officers undertaking specialist training, transfers following permanent appointments at other facilities and resignations," it noted.

The state health department said that it has taken measures such as optimising existing human resources, mobilising MOs from other public healthcare facilities through the cluster hospital initiative, as well as reallocating doctors based on service requirements and workload demands.

"JKNP remains committed to ensuring that the welfare of healthcare personnel continues to receive due attention, while also guaranteeing that healthcare services for the public are delivered with quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness," it added.

It was also reported that the O&G clinic in Hospital Segamat will be closed from July 1, while referrals for stable and elective cases from Rompin and Gemas will be deferred for now.

Sandakan hospital restructures services amid MO shortage

PETALING JAYA: A shortage of manpower has driven several government hospitals to restructure their services.

For instance, Hospital Duchess of Kent in Sandakan has implemented temporary measures such as moving lodger beds, prioritising services and realigning the schedules of visiting specialists.

In an internal memo dated June 9 sighted by *The Star*, it said the General Medicine Department is carrying out operational adjustment and optimisation measures to maximise the use of resources.

"These measures are intended to ensure continuity of service delivery, patient safety, effective clinical risk management and the welfare of staff members," it said.

It also explained that the steps taken were due to recent changes in the department's workforce composition following the release of several medical officers (MO) to pursue specialist training, as well as other vacancies to be filled.

The memo said affected services will be progressively restored to their original operations once the manpower situation improves.

For this, the department needs at least 18 medical officers.

The use of lodger beds in the male orthopaedic ward and the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) ward will be suspended to channel available resources to the main wards.

Four lodger beds in the gynaecology ward will be retained, while the lodger bed area in the

ENT ward will be temporarily repurposed as a "transit area" for patients who have been authorised for discharge, the memo said.

The frequency of visiting specialist clinics, including the palliative visiting clinic, will also be temporarily adjusted based on operational capacity.

"Clinics previously conducted on a monthly basis will be rescheduled according to service requirements and available resources," it said.

The hospital pledged that it would still prioritise emergency and acute cases based on clinical need and operational capacity.

"Patients who are clinically stable and suitable for transfer will be referred to, or followed up, at the appropriate healthcare facilities according to clinical requirements, to ensure continuity of optimal patient care," it said.

The memo also said these operational adjustments are temporary and do not constitute a permanent change to the scope or capacity of services provided by the Department of General Medicine.

Sabah Women, Health and People's Wellbeing Minister Datuk Julita Majungki, when contacted, said the temporary measures at Hospital Duchess of Kent are meant to ensure that services are maintained while long-term solutions are developed.

She said the hospital is facing increasing demand as it is a major referral centre.

Activist urges immediate youth vape ban over drug abuse fears

KUCHING: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has been urged to impose an immediate ban on vaping among youths amid rising concerns over vape products being used to deliver synthetic drug abuse.

Social activist Voon Shiak Ni said the drug known as 'piu-piu', a mixture of vape liquids, is being sold in inexpensive disposable pods that are easy to conceal and heavily marketed to young people through social media.

"As the drug is easily accessible, youth vaping is becoming a serious threat to public safety and

must be treated with the highest level of concern.

"Drug-laced vape products pose an added danger because users may not know what substances they are inhaling.

"Young people may be exposed to addictive drugs without fully understanding the risks," she said in a statement.

Voon stressed that vaping must never become a new channel for drug distribution, especially among youths.

She noted that drug abuse is widely associated with serious social problems, including

impaired driving, fatal road accidents, violence and other criminal activities.

According to her, individuals under the influence of drugs may experience poor judgement, reduced concentration, aggression and slower reaction time, putting innocent lives at risk.

"Fatal road accidents are rampant, and one of the contributing factors is drug-impaired driving," she said.

Voon added that enforcement authorities have reported fatal road accidents involving drivers who tested positive for substances

such as methamphetamine (syabu), cannabis and other drugs.

She said such cases highlighted the dangers posed by drivers whose ability to reach and make safe decisions is compromised.

Recalling several recent incidents, she pointed to a fatal crash in Klang in March that claimed the lives of a young father and a delivery rider and was reportedly linked to drug abuse.

She also cited another fatal accident in Kampar that killed a 10-year-old boy and injured three others, where the accused was alleged to have been driving

under the influence of drugs.

"Public concern has also been raised over serious crashes involving heavy vehicle drivers suspected of drug use.

"The consequences can be devastating because buses and lorries pose greater risks to other road users as well as their passengers," she said.

Voon further highlighted that drug addiction can contribute to offences such as robbery, burglary, assault and other violent crimes.

She said some offenders commit crimes to fund their

addiction, while others act under the influence of substances that impair behaviour and judgement.

As such, she urged the federal government to strictly prohibit vape products containing illegal substances and strengthen enforcement against manufacturers and distributors.

"The issue is not merely about vaping but about protecting lives, preventing crime and safeguarding future generations.

"Any vape product used as a vehicle to deliver illegal drugs must have no place in Malaysia," she added.

Six-second sleep therapy: Between benefits, risks

By Balkish Awang

KUALA LUMPUR: In today's fast-moving world, stress has become an almost inevitable part of life, affecting many both mentally and physically, often driven by work and other pressures.

In response, many turn to self-care, visiting spas, massage centres or seeking treatments from practitioners offering various techniques to ease physical and emotional tension.

Recently, a method known as 'six-second sleep therapy' has emerged as a popular trend, with many claiming its effectiveness.

However, Malaysia's Ministry of Health (MoH) has warned the public against trying the treatment, cautioning that it could be potentially fatal.

Disputing the ministry's warning, therapy practitioner Ahmad Noordin Mohd Azmi described the term 'six-second sleep' as 'simply a label for what is essentially a long-practised traditional method in alternative medicine'.

"Different practitioners give different names to this technique, but the goal is essentially the same – to help restore and stimulate the nervous system," he said.

Explaining that there were various types of nerve treatments not widely known to the public, Ahmad Noordin, who has five years of experience in addressing a range of critical nerve-related conditions, said the method did not treat diseases.



AHMAD NOORDIN MOHD AZMI



DR. AHMAD SHAHIR MAWARDI

Different practitioners give different names to this technique, but the goal is essentially the same – to help restore and stimulate the nervous system.

— Ahmad Noordin Mohd Azmi, therapy practitioner

"Instead, it helps stimulate weakened nerves by improving blood flow to specific areas of the body."

According to him, clients often report feeling lighter, more refreshed and energised after treatment, with improvements in symptoms such as fatigue, heaviness in the head and blurred vision.

However, he stressed that such outcomes were 'subjective, and experienced individually'.

"The therapy is commonly sought by those experiencing head discomfort, fatigue, difficulty in sleeping and neck tension."

However, Ahmad Noordin

acknowledged that the treatment could carry risks if performed by inexperienced or untrained practitioners.

He added that a patient's body appearing to convulse during the procedure was merely an outward reaction, indicating that the individual's nervous system was already in a severely compromised condition.

"If you are unsure or doubtful about the treatment, don't proceed, even if many claim it works. If the mind is doubtful, healing will never be complete, even with an experienced practitioner," he cautioned.

Meanwhile, neurologist Dr Ahmad Shahir Mawardi



According to a neurologist, practising good 'sleep hygiene' is not just about physical cleanliness, but also about creating conditions that allow the body to rest optimally. — Photo from pexels.com

from Hospital Kuala Lumpur said claims of the therapy's effectiveness in treating nerve-related conditions were not supported by scientific or clinical evidence.

According to him, the technique involves applying pressure to the carotid arteries, major blood vessels located on both sides of the neck that supply oxygen and nutrients to the brain.

"When pressure is applied to these arteries, it disrupts blood flow to the brain, including oxygen supply, resulting in a condition known as cerebral 'hypoperfusion'."

"This may cause the individual to appear asleep, disoriented or experience seizure-like movements. Once the pressure is released, consciousness returns as blood flow resumes," he told Bernama.

From a clinical perspective, he said the term 'carotid' originated from the ancient Greek word 'karoun', meaning 'to fall into deep sleep' or 'to stupefy' – linked to early observations by physicians such as Rufus of Ephesus and Galen of Pergamon.

Addressing whether the therapy could truly treat conditions as claimed, Dr Ahmad Shahir said there was no clinical evidence that it could cure issues

such as stress, hypertension or insomnia.

"Instead, it may lead to significant medical complications such as sudden fainting, stroke, carotid artery injury, cardiac arrhythmia, cerebral hypoxia, permanent brain damage, seizures, and even death," he warned.

He stressed that the brief loss of consciousness induced by the method was not healthy sleep, but rather fainting caused by disrupted blood flow to the brain.

"This is what makes the therapy extremely dangerous, as it can result in serious health complications, including permanent brain damage."

Dr Ahmad Shahir added that the neck contained not only blood vessels but also complex nerve structures that might be injured during the procedure.

"Of particular concern are baroreceptors located in the carotid sinus, which regulate blood pressure and bodily balance."

"When blood pressure to the brain drops, signals are sent to the heart to pump harder – a response that can be dangerous, especially for individuals with undiagnosed heart conditions."

"This can lead to complications such as heart failure, irregular heartbeat and even death," he

said.

Dr Ahmad Shahir further said that prolonged disruption of oxygen supply to the brain could cause stroke, as brain tissue was highly sensitive and could suffer irreversible damage after about four minutes without adequate oxygen.

He believed that the therapy's popularity might be fuelled by celebrity endorsements and viral claims of its effectiveness.

However, he strongly advised those considering the treatment to seek professional medical advice first.

"For safety, consult a qualified doctor. This treatment is not recognised under the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Act 2016, and neither is it part of any recognised modern or traditional medical practice," he said.

Instead, Dr Ahmad Shahir recommended safer and clinically proven approaches such as practising good 'sleep hygiene', establishing routines and environments that could support quality rest.

"It's not just about physical cleanliness, but about creating conditions that allow the body to rest optimally. If these measures fail, seek treatment from a medical specialist," he added.

— Bernama

Warta segera bahan baharu dadah sintetik

Kelewatan kemas kini jadual bahan kimia dalam Akta Racun boleh jejas siasatan polis

Johor Bahru: Pihak berkuasa dan agensi kawal selia berdepan dengan cabaran untuk menyegerakan proses menyenaraikan bahan kimia berbahaya dijumpai dalam dadah sintetik ke dalam Jadual Akta Racun 1952 bagi memastikan tindakan perundangan dapat diambil tanpa sebarang kekangan.

Menteri Dalam Negeri, Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, berkata tindakan itu amat kritikal kerana kelewatanewartakan bahan itu akan memberi implikasi langsung serta menjejaskan kelancaran kertas siasatan pihak polis.

"Apabila siasatan polis mendapati satu kes bermula daripada dadah sintetik, prosesnya diantar ke Jabatan Kimia. Bila dikenal pasti elemen racun di situ dan tiba-tiba dalam senarai racun tak tersenarai, ia akan menyukarkan proses siasatan perundangan selanjutnya," katanya.

Beliau berkata demikian pada sidang media selepas menghadiri program Jelajah Aspirasi Bebas Dadah anjuran Agensi Antidadah Kebangsaan (AADK) di Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Puteri Wangsa di sini semalam.

Ia bagi mengulas kenyataan Timbalan Ketua Polis Negara,

Tan Sri Ayob Khan Mydin Pitchay mengenai kemunculan dadah sintetik baharu dikenali sebagai 'Piu Piu' di pasaran yang dikesan dicampurkan dalam cecair rokok elektronik membuktikan peranti itu wajar diharamkan.

Ayob Khan berkata, ini kerana dadah mengandungi campuran Fentanyl dan bahan kimia psikoaktif itu boleh memberikan kesan khayal teruk seumpama 'zombi' kepada penggunanya.

Cari jalan penyelesaian

Saifuddin berkata, isu membabitkan klasifikasi bahan racun itu sudah dibawa dan dibincangkan pada peringkat Jemaah Menteri bagi mencari jalan penyelesaian tuntas.

Sehubungan itu, Kementerian Dalam Negeri (KDN) kini mempertingkatkan koordinasi bersama Kementerian Kesihatan (KKM) dan Jabatan Kimia bagi memastikan penguatkuasaan undang-undang terhadap sindiket dadah sintetik baharu dapat dilaksanakan secara lebih efektif.

Beliau mendedahkan berdasarkan pemetaan profil data penyalahgunaan dadah negara, trend pengambilan dadah sintetik dikesan paling serius di negeri Pantai Timur, khususnya bermula dari Kelantan dan Terengganu sebelum menular ke Pahang.

Beliau berkata, berbeza dengan kawasan Pantai Barat yang masih merekodkan penggunaan bahan campuran seperti ganja dan heroin, kawasan Pantai Timur kini didominasi penularan dadah sintetik yang membawa kesan jauh lebih parah dan membimbangkan.

Beliau berkata, negara mere-

Tindakan itu amat kritikal kerana kelewatanewartakan bahan itu akan memberi implikasi langsung serta menjejaskan kelancaran kertas siasatan pihak polis

Saifuddin Nasution Ismail,
Menteri Dalam Negeri



kodkan statistik membimbangkan dalam isu keselamatan domestik apabila sejumlah 192,000 individu disahkan terbabit dalam kancah penyalahgunaan dadah dan bahan terlarang di seluruh negara.

Mengulas mengenai situasi di Johor, beliau berkata negeri itu merekodkan purata 499 orang terbabit dengan penyalahgunaan dadah bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk.

Meskipun purata negeri itu berada di bawah paras nasional, beliau berkata, Mersing mencatatkan angka membimbangkan apabila merekodkan kadar tertinggi di Johor iaitu mencecah 1,200 orang bagi setiap 100,000 penduduk, diikuti Pontian, Kota Tinggi, dan Segamat. **BERNAMA**