

Yes to a private-public partnership

THE Academy of Medicine of Malaysia (AMM) welcomes the government's decision to engage with private sector healthcare providers to ease the burden on public hospitals and healthcare workers. On behalf of over 3,000 medical specialists in Malaysia from the public, private and academic sectors represented by the AMM, we are prepared to serve and assist the Health Ministry with its Covid-19 management plan, irrespective of our place of duty.

We acknowledge that there are many facets that need attention to streamline the public and private healthcare systems effectively and efficiently. This includes, but is not limited to, patient coverage, distribution of hospital beds and personal protective equipment, and fair compensation for healthcare workers.

We note that there is some concern regarding private hospitals' capacity to manage Covid-19 patients given the limited human resource infrastructure, intensive care unit set-up and private sector specialists who themselves may belong to high-risk groups. We trust that all these matters will be accounted for and hope to see creative solutions such as secondments



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of medical staff to private hospitals and cross-referrals between hospitals.

Coordinating the two healthcare systems will be no mean feat but we are confident in the Health Ministry's ability, in collaboration with the Association of Private Hospitals Malaysia and all relevant stakeholders, to find solutions that will best suit all parties.

This is also a timely collaboration in light of the increase in Covid-19 infections among healthcare workers. While we understand that only a third of infections are nosocomial, ie originating in the hospital, we

are deeply concerned for our colleagues on the frontline. The third wave has almost overwhelmed Malaysia's healthcare system, thus stretching thin the surveillance and protective measures in place.

That said, these are risks which we healthcare workers recognised when we answered the call of duty. The AMM sees great potential in private-public partnerships helping to mitigate these risks for our frontline healthcare workers in the future.

We are prepared to contribute in any way that we can to support the Health Ministry, namely in educat-

ing and engaging with specialists. For example, the College of Radiology, AMM, will be conducting a webinar on Saturday to prepare radiology departments in various hospitals for imaging and managing Covid-19 patients. The webinar will cover infrastructure preparation, consent and scanning procedures in Covid-19 patients, among other topics, focusing on department safety procedures within red-zone areas. Meanwhile, the College of Anaesthesiologists, AMM; Malaysian Society of Anaesthesiologists; and Malaysian Society of Intensive Care have conducted virtual workshops on Covid-19 protocols for patients in critical care. We can replicate and adapt similar virtual training for other departments and specialties to support the Health Ministry with capacity-building in hospitals nationwide.

If we collectively mobilise all public and private healthcare resources, we will have sufficient surge capacity to keep the pandemic under control until we achieve herd immunity through widespread vaccination. We hope that this is only the first step in a long-term process of better integrating our healthcare system for the benefit of all Malaysians.

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Note: The AMM, embracing 11 Colleges and 15 Chapters, is a registered body representing medical specialists in Malaysia.