

Concern over MQE standards

> Medical fraternity feels it may not be in best interest of healthcare system

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PETALING JAYA: The medical fraternity has raised concerns about the impact on exam standards if all 33 local public and private medical varsities are allowed to conduct the Medical Qualifying Exam (MQE).

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Mary Cardosa told *theSun* that the move may not be in the best interest of the healthcare system as there may be variations in the standards of the examination in each university.

"On the whole, I do not think that this is such a great idea as there will surely be a lot of variation in standards," she said.

"To be fair, there must be some form of standardisation of the final exams, in terms of format as well as content."

Cardosa was responding to *theSun*'s front page report yesterday, which quoted Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai as saying that all 33 local institutions offering medical courses would be able to conduct the MQE in five years or so.

The MQE, which is compulsory for graduates from unrecognised foreign medical varsities, is set at par with the final-year examinations for local medical graduates.

Liow had announced on May 1 that 16 universities are now allowed to conduct the MQE compared to three previously.

The 16 universities are: Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Penang Medical College, International Medical University, AIMST University, Melaka-Manipal Medical College, Royal College of Medicine Perak, Monash University Sunway Campus, UCSI University, Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, and the Management and Science University.

"The remaining 17 will be allowed to conduct the examination once they have produced their first batch of medical graduates," Liow had said.

Liow added that the move was to

make the exam more liberal and accessible to graduates, but gave assurance that standards of the MQE would not be compromised.

However, Cardosa said some measures must be taken to ensure that the same standards are maintained for all the different universities.

"There must be observer(s) from the Malaysian Medical Council at each exam, and there should also be monitoring of the passing rate for each university."

A senior doctor who declined to be named also expressed concern that this move would leave the MQE open to abuse or profiteering.

The doctor, who heads a department in a public hospital, said some rogue universities may even 'leak' exam questions in order to boost passing rates and attract more candidates to sit for the exam there.

"Some years ago, a local law university was accused of making it 'easy' to pass the Certificate of Legal Practice (CLP). While a lawyer can plead the case if he loses, a sub-standard doctor can put many patients' lives in danger," he warned.