

Doctors: Stringent screening processes vital in hospitals

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PETALING JAYA: Stringent screening processes are important in hospitals to minimise Covid-19 outbreaks there, say health experts.

Staff members are also urged to be vigilant to maintain the standard operating procedure (SOP) even outside working hours, though an expert also assured the public not to be anxious when visiting the hospital.

Malaysian Public Health Physicians Association president Datuk Dr Zainal Ariffin Omar said a tighter screening process of patients, visitors and staff members in the hospital could help in preventing virus transmission in healthcare settings.

"It is also vital to relieve staff with a history of exposure or who have symptoms from their duty.

"Staff would also need to follow the stand-

ard operating procedure either outside the workplace or working hours," he said.

Medical Practitioners Coalition Association of Malaysia president Dr Raj Kumar Maharajah said the high number of medical practitioners being infected by their colleagues could indicate that they could have let their guard down when mingling with their colleagues.

"SOPs are probably not practised in the doctors' lounge, pantry or in other areas. The intra-department SOPs may have to be tightened, besides the SOPs at hospital entrances," he said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia medical epidemiologist Assoc Prof Dr Malina Osman said the infection among medical practitioners could affect healthcare delivery to the public.

"The number of those who have to be on the ground could decrease. In certain settings, it has been reported that the affected units

would need to be closed temporarily until sufficient staff is available," she said.

She added that there might be times when close friends in job settings were likely to have transmitted the virus.

"The reminder to keep guard against potential infection as well as sharing any relevant information on any possible positive cases among staff would be highly recommended," she said.

However, Prof Dr Victor Hoe from Universiti Malaya's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine said the numbers announced by the Health Ministry were not something to be alarmed about.

"Regarding the number of healthcare workers getting infected from fellow professionals, the same situation also occurs in other workplaces.

"During meal times when the healthcare workers need to remove masks, there is the

risk of exposure. There are also cases where the healthcare workers were infected by their fellow housemates who are also healthcare workers. Many of our young healthcare workers are sharing houses with other healthcare workers," he said.

He urged the public not to be worried about coming to the hospitals.

"The current SOPs are sufficient to protect healthcare workers, patients and visitors coming to hospitals or clinics. Since the number of cases in the community is on the high side at the moment, we need to treat all people as potential Covid-19 cases," he said.



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