**TALENT GROOMING PROGRAM (TGP) PROJECT**

***FACTORS ATTRIBUTING MINISTRY OF HEALTH REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS TO PRACTICE LOCUM IN THE STATE OF MELAKA***

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**Where does the word “locum” come from?**

The word locum comes from the Latin phrase *locum tenens*, which means “place holder”. A locum is a person who temporarily fulfils the duties of another. A locum doctor is therefore a doctor who covers for another doctor who is on leave.

According to the Cambridge Dictionary Locum is defined as “a doctor who does the job of another doctor who is ill or on holiday” meanwhile the Oxford dictionary defines it as “a person who stands in temporarily for someone else of the same profession, especially a cleric or doctor.”

In Malaysia a ***Locum*** generally points to a doctor or a dentist who works at a clinic or a hospital in place of the actual person or as an extra hand to run the clinic. It is mainly done by government doctors or freelance doctors at private healthcare facilities such as general practitioner’s (GP) clinic or private hospital (mostly at the Emergency Department).

In a press statement release by the office of the Director General of Health (DG MOH) on 25 June 2015, who also heads the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) mentioned that there are some unregistered persons include those who do not have medical qualifications (bogus doctor) or those who possess a medical qualification but are not eligible or unfit for full registration with the council, are being employed as Locums by some unethical owners of GP Clinics. There have been instances where owners or persons in charge of the clinics are duped into believing that a particular locum applicant is registered after they are shown forged documents including registration and annual practicing certificates (APC).

However, the onus is on the doctor or the person in charge of the clinic, to ensure that the employed Locum is a qualified and is fully registered medical practitioner, and in possession of a valid current annual practicing certificate issued by the MMC. Whether having done so knowingly or unknowingly, the doctor in charge of the premises involved in employing an unqualified or unlicensed person, would has violated the CPC 2019 MMC Malaysia, (2019)*, and* thus theMedical Act 1971 (Commissioner of Law Malaysia, 2006), and is liable to disciplinary action by the Council.

As such, all private healthcare facility in charge or licensees are called upon to properly verify the qualification, full MMC registration and APC status of any medical doctor that is to be employed in their clinic or hospital, and to make sure that they practice in accordance to what is stipulated in their APCs, failing which, they may be charged with violating the provisions in the *Code of Professional Conduct and the Medical Act 1971* and the *Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 (Act 586)* (Commissioner of Law Malaysia, 1998)

The aim of this study is **Factors Attributing Ministry of Health Registered Medical Practitioners to Practice Locum in The State of Melaka.** The MOH medical practitioners must possess a full registration from the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC) and must have completed at least 1 year as a Registered Medical Practitioner as required by the *Ministry of Health (2010) Guidelines for the practise of locum 2010* and possess obtain an approval from the State Health Director of Melaka to practice locum, as stipulated in the mentioned guidelines.

RMPs tend to practice locum for many reasons more so by those employed by the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. The few that happen to be the main reason relates to the low wages in the Government compared to the private sectors. This happened mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. There after there were 2 revisions in the remuneration by the Government of Malaysia. Hence this study will help to identify if the reasons the same or there is a shift to other reasons.

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## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The Medical Act 1971 (Commissioner of Law Malaysia, 2006), stipulates that any medical practitioner must be registered with the Malaysian medical Council (MMC) before being able to practice medicine legally in Malaysia. The Council’s Code of Professional Conduct also provides that any registered medical practitioner involved in improper delegation of medical duties, including the employment of unqualified or unregistered persons, will be liable to disciplinary punishment. This allows the Malaysian Medical Council to ensure that the Malaysian public receives competent and safe medical care. Therefore, every Medical Officer must be fully registered with MMC before he or she is able to practice as a locum in any clinic or hospital in Malaysia.

The Circular from The Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Health 5/2006 (MOH Malaysia, 2006) , i.e. The Guidelines for Registered Medical Officers and Dental officers (employed by MOH) to do locum. It states that every Registered Medical Practitioners employed by MOH must obtain the permission from the Head of Department through their Relevant Head of Units. The Head of Department here is the State Director of Health.

*Ministry of Health (2010) Guidelines for the practise of locum 2010* states that every medical officer who wishes to do locum shall only be able to do it after obtaining permission from the head of department. It also states that it is compulsory for every doctor to state the primary location of the practice and every address of locum practice in their APC.

In the *Section 31 (c) and (d) of the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 (Act 586) (Commissioner of Law Malaysia, 1998)* that a licensee or a holder of a certificate of registration in respect of a licensed or registered private healthcare facility or service shall ensure that persons employed or engaged by the licensed or registered private healthcare facility or service are registered under any law regulating their registration, or in the absence of any such law, hold such qualification and experience as are recognized by the Director General; and comply with such other duties and responsibilities as may be prescribed.

In a study by Mohd Hanis et al., (2006*)*, he mentions that insufficient income is a factor that positively influence locum practice among Government registered medical officers to earn extra income. Locum practice is done mostly at the private healthcare facilities rather than MOH facilities.

Mohd Fauzi et al., (2020)in their study mentions that work-related ruminations during non-work time were common and associated with poor fatigue and recovery outcomes while overt work activities done at workplace during non-work time were associated with better fatigue and recovery levels.

Therefore, all medical officers including specialists must state all the addresses of places of practice in the APC and obtain the approval to practice as a locum from the head of department if employed by the Ministry of Health. For the State of Melaka, the Head of Department is the State Health Director.

Hence the aim of this study is **Factors Attributing Ministry of Health Registered Medical Practitioners to Practice Locum in The State of Melaka.** In the same time data collected from MOH doctors will allow researcher to look deeper into the reasons that influence the practice of locum among the MOH RMPs and how this has affected the Government Health Care industry itself.

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**OBJECTIVE**

### **General Objective**

The general objective is to investigate the factors attributing MOH Registered Medical Practitioners to practice locum in the State of Melaka

### **Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To verify the number of MOH medical officers practicing locum
2. To identify the possible attributing factors
3. To investigate the knowledge and awareness of the MOH RMPs regarding locum practice rules and regulations.
4. To identify the learning and experiences of the RMPs from locum practice

# 

# **METHODOLOGY**

This is a cross sectional study which involves the Ministry of Health Registered Medical Practitioners in MOH facilities in State of Melaka. The RMPS will be required to answer the questions using the google form. To get the above information, the Google form (Appendix 1) link will be sent to all MOH doctors.

The number of samples needed for this study is calculated using Qualtrics Sample Size Calculator. As of 31 July 2022, according to the human resource officer of the Melaka State Health Department, the number of government employed doctors, in the various categories, who are fully registered is as shown in table 1 below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Category** | **Number of RMPs** |
| 1 | Medical Officers in Permanent Employment | 787 |
| 2 | Medical Officers in Contract Employment | 527 |
| 3 | Specialist Medical Officers | 169 |
|  | Total | 1483 |

**Table 1: Number of Registered Medical Practitioners in Government Service in the State of Melaka**

Therefore, according to the Qualtrics Sample Size Calculator , the sample size required is 306 respondents.

**Figure 1: Variables used**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Variable** | **Definition** | **Scale of Measurement** |
| 1. | Age | Age in year 2022 | Years |
| 2. | Gender | The Gender of the RMP | Male / female |
| 3 | Ethnicity | The race of the RMP | Ethnicity of the RMP |
| 4. | Status of Locum Practitioner | Whether the Locum Practitioner is a medical officer or a specialist | Status |
| 5. | Year of Full Registration | Year in which the RMP was fully registered | Year |
| 6. | Place of practice in KKM facility | Place of work of Locum MO in KKM | Name of clinic / department / Hospital |
| 7. | Medical Indemnity | Whether the Medical Officer has medical indemnity or not | Yes or no |
| 8. | Approval | Whether the Medical Officer has approval to practice locum from the State health Director. | Yes or No |
| 9. | Awareness of Rules and circulars | Is the Locum Medical Officer aware of the Rules and Guidelines and circulars on Locum from The KSU KKM and DG KKM? | Yes or No |
| 10. | Awareness of disciplinary Action | Is the Locum Medical Officer aware that disciplinary actions can be taken against him/her if caught practicing Locum without approval? | Yes or no |
| 11. | Locum Employer asked for APC | Has the Locum Employer ever asked for the APC of the Locum MO? | Yes or no |
| 12. | Addition of Clinic Address in APC | Has the Locum employer ever asked the Locum MO to add his/her clinic/hospital name in the Locum MO’s APC? | Yes or no |
| 13. | Practice of Locum | Whether the Locum Mo practices Locum at specific clinics or randomly when engaged? | Specific or random |
| 14. | Factors that Attribute | Attributing factors influencing RMPs to Practice Locum | Multiple Choice |
| 15. | Number of clinics | Number of private clinics or hospitals that the MO practices locum at. | Number |
| 16. | How often | The frequency of Locum Practice by number of days per month | 1 – 2  3 – 5  6 – 15  > 15 |
| 17. | Location | Does the Locum MO practice locum outside Melaka? | Yes or no |
| 18. | New knowledge | Whether the Locum MO gained any new knowledge while practicing locum | Yes or no |
| 19. | Work Hindrance | Does practising Locum hinder the MO’s current work? | Yes or no |
| 20. | Reprimanded | Has the MO ever been reprimanded by his HOD? | Yes or no |
| 21. | Briefing | Has the MO ever been briefed by the HOD regarding Locum Practice? | Yes or no |
| 22. | Reminder for applying Approval | Has the HOD ever reminded or asked the Locum MO to apply for approval from the State Health Director? | Yes or No |
| 23. | Master’s Program | Is the Locum MO in the Master’s Program by MOH or JPA scholarships? | Yes or no |
| 24. | Confidence | Dose the MO feel confident when treating patients during his/her Locum practice? | Yes or no |
| 25. | Assistance | Does the locum employer assist the Locum MO when he/she runs into a problem during the Locum? | Yes or no |
| 26. | Care | Does the locum employer take care of the basic needs of the Locum MO such as place to rest and food? | Yes or no |
| 27 | Level of approval | Should the authority to give approval to practice locum be given to the Hospital Directors and District Health Officers instead of the State Health Department? | Yes or no |
| 28. | Hourly income | How much per hour is paid to the Locum MO/Specialist? | Choose from options |
| 29. | Wage Opinion | How much should be actually paid per hour? | Amount |
| 30. | Monthly income | How much is the income of the Locum MO in a month | Choose from options |
| 31. | Aspired Income | How much income is aspired by the Locum MO/Specialist in a month? | Amount |
| 32. | Work – Life Balance | Does Locum Practice affect the work – life balance of the Locum MO / Specialist? | Yes – greatly but needs the money  Yes – slightly  Not affected  WLB does nor affect |

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## **PLAN FOR DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

The data obtained from the private practitioners will verified. Once verified, the data will be tabulated in an excel format and incomplete data forms will be removed so that the actual data will be obtained.

The analysis will be made using data tabulated in the excel format than later analysed thru the SSPS system.

The data obtained from the MOH doctors practicing locum will be analysed to determine to factors that attribute MOH doctor to apply to practice locum. The data that is obtained will be analysed to see the level of awareness of the RMPs and whether the RMPs observe the Locum Guidelines and circulars form the Ministry of Health.

The outcome of this analyses will eventually help the researcher to look deeper into the purpose of practicing locum, which in hand allow the researcher to suggest policy changes and better policy reforms towards the welfare of government employed doctors. It will help to formulate the remedial actions to create awareness and ultimately increase the percentage of MOH doctors practicing locum to apply for approval from the State Health Director of Melaka.

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## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**Table 2:** **Proposed Gantt Chart**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TIME  ACTIVITY | JUNE 2022 | JULY 2022 | AUG 2022 | SEPT 2022 | OCT 2022 | NOV 2022 | DEC 2022 | JAN 2023 | FEB 2023 | MAR 2023 | APR 2023 | MAY 2023 | JUNE 2023 | JULY 2023 | AUG 2023 | SEPT 20223 |
| PROPOSAL DEVELOPEMENT | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| REVIEW PROPOSAL |  |  | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| DATA COLLECTION |  |  |  | X | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| DATA ANALYSIS |  |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| REPORT WRITING |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X |  |  |  |  |  |
| SUBMISSION |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X | X |  |  |  |
| PRESENTATION/PUBLICATION |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | X | X | X | X |

## REFERENCES

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire for the MOH Registered Medical Practitioners

Sent via WhatsApp (Using Google Form) to the doctors

**Disclaimer**

This questionnaire is to identify the possible factors attributing the MOH Registered Medical Practitioners to practice locum in the State of Melaka. It wis also to measure the awareness of the MOH RMPs regarding various circulars by the MOH KSU and the DG of MOH. This survey is for the data collection for a study by Dr Mitesh Chandrakant titled “FACTORS ATTRIBUTING MINISTRY OF HEALTH REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS TO PRACTICE LOCUM IN THE STATE OF MELAKA”

OBJECTIVE

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4. To identify the learning and experiences of the RMPs from locum practice

This study is anonymous and for academic purposes only. Every respondent will fill the forms voluntarily and no data shall be used to identify the respondent.

I thank you for your kind response.

As a disclaimer, all data submitted is for academic purpose and to assist in the management of locum practices in Melaka. However, sensitive data shall NOT be shared with any other party(s) besides those involved in this study. There will no mention of any individual data in the final paper when produced, presented, or printed.

Thank you.

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Year of MMC Full registration: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Are you a specialist?

1. Yes
2. No

3. If yes, are you practicing specialist locum or GP locum?

1. GP locum only
2. Specialist Locum only
3. Mix of both

**FACTORS ATTRIBUTING TO DO LOCUM**

4. Purpose of practicing LOCUM. Tick all that apply.

1. To increase Income
2. To gain more experience
3. To help in a private clinic of Relative/Friends etc.
4. Forced to do by Senior MO/Specialist
5. Intent to open own practice hence learning the know how
6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. Have you included the address of the place of your locum practice into your Annual Practicing Certificate (APC)?

1. Yes
2. No

6. Do you have Medical Indemnity Insurance?

1. Yes
2. No

7. Have applied for the approval to practice locum from the State Health Director thru your Head of Department/Unit?

1. Yes
2. No

8. If answer is NO to no. 7, what hinders you from applying for the approval?

1. Refusal to do so
2. Did not know the procedure
3. Fear of rejection if applied
4. Did not want HOD to know of the activity
5. Did not know that there was such a thing
6. I am sure I won’t be caught
7. Unsure why

9. Are you aware of the rules and circulars regarding Locum Practice by The KSU KKM and DG KKM?

1. Yes
2. No

10. Are you aware that a disciplinary action (Tindakan Tatatertib) can be taken against you if caught doing locum without approval?

1. Yes
2. No

11. Has your locum employer ever asked for your APC?

1. Yes
2. No

12. Has your locum employer told you to add his/her clinic name and address into your APC?

1. Yes
2. No

13. Do you practice locum at specific clinics or just randomly?

1. Specific Clinics only
2. Randomly - whenever called by anyone

14. How many clinics do you practice locum at? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you practice Locum outside Melaka state?

1. Yes
2. No

16. How often do you practice locum?

1. 1-2 times a month
2. 3-5 times a month
3. 6 to 15 times a month
4. more than 15 times a month

**LEARNING and EXPERIENCE**

17. Have gained new knowledge while doing locum?

1. Yes
2. No

18. Has practicing locum hinder your current work?

1. Yes
2. No

19. Have you been ever reprimanded by your HOD regarding your locum practice?

1. Yes
2. No

20. Have you been briefed regarding locum practice by your department or unit head?

1. Yes
2. No

21. Have you been ever reminded or told by your department or unit head to apply for approval to practice locum?

1. Yes
2. No

22. Are you in any Master’s Program by KKM/JPA?

1. Yes
2. No

23. Do you feel confident to treat a patient while practicing Locum?

1. Yes
2. No

24. Does your Locum employer assist you if you run into problems when practicing locum?

1. All the time
2. Only when he/she is in town
3. Very seldom
4. Never

25. Does your locum employer take care of your basic needs like a place to rest and food?

1. All of them do
2. None of them
3. Some of them only

**POLICY AND PRACTICE**

26. In your opinion, should the approval be at the level of Hospital Directors or the District Health Officers instead of the State Health Director?

1. Yes
2. No

27. How much are you paid per hour of locum?

1. LESS THAN RM 30 PER HOUR
2. RM30 to RM35 PER HOUR
3. RM36 to RM50 PER HOUR
4. RM51 to RM75 PER HOUR
5. RM76 TO RM100 PER HOUR
6. RM101 TO RM200 PER HOUR
7. MORE THAN RM200 PER HOUR

28. In your opinion, how much per hour should you be paid?

1. less than RM500 a month
2. RM501 to RM1000 a month
3. RM1001 to RM2500 a month
4. RM2501 to RM5000 a month
5. more than RM5000 a month

29. How much do you earn a month from your Locum Practice? (This information will be kept confidential) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

30. How much do you aspire to earn a month from your Locum Practice? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

31. Does practicing locum affect your work - life balance?

1. Yes - I am greatly affected - I need the money
2. Yes - I am slightly affected
3. No, I am Not affected by it
4. Work - life balance does not affect me

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

Your kind and honest response will help me and the department to investigate the locum practice policy for better solutions and outcomes. It will help the system to come up with better policies and guidelines to make the healthcare system more robust. You are an integral part of the healthcare system and I thank you very much.

Appendix 2

Data Analysis Charts of the Questionnaires

Analysis

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question No. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| Respondent  Number. | Year of MMC Full registration | Are you a specialist? | If yes, are you doing specialist locum or GP locum? | Purpose of doing LOCUM | If answer is NO to no. 7, what hinders you from applying for the approval? | Have you included the address of the place of your locum practice into your Annual Practicing Certificate (APC)? | Do you have Medical Indemnity Insurance? | Have applied for the approval to practice locum from the State Health Director thru your Head of Department / Unit?. |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question No | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| Questions | Are you aware of the rules and circulars regarding Locum Practice by The KSU KKM and DG KKM? | Are you aware that a disciplinary action (Tindakan Tatatertib) can be taken against you if caught doing locum without approval? | Has your locum employer ever asked for your APC? | Has your locum employer told you to add his/her clinic name and address in to your APC? | Do you practice locum at specific clinics or just randomly? | How many clinics do you practice locum at? | Do you practice Locum outside Melaka state? | How often do you practice locum? | Have gained new knowledge while doing locum? | Has practicing locum hinder your current work? |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question No | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| Questions | Have your been ever reprimanded by your boss regarding your locum practice? | Have you been briefed regarding locum practice by your department or unit head? | Have your been ever reminded or told by your department or unit head to apply for approval to practice locum? | Are you in any Masters Program by KKM/JPA? | Do you feel confident to treat a patient while practicing Locum? | Does your Locum employer assist you if you run into problems when practicing locum? | Does your locum employer take care of your basic needs like a place to rest and food? | In your opinion, should the approval be at the level of Hospital Directors or the District Health Officers instead of the State Health Director? | How much are you paid per hour of locum? | In your opinion, how much per hour should you be paid? |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question No | 29 | 30 | 31 |
| Questions | How much do you earn a month from your Locum Practice? (This information will be kept confidential) | How much do you aspire to earn a month from your Locum Practice? | Does practicing locum affect your work - life balance? |
|  |  |  |  |