

Too long a wait for doctors to specialise, says Jeyaindran

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PETALING JAYA: Due to a limited number of slots, many doctors have to wait for about 15 years before they can do their master's and become specialists.

This was one reason why some top Malaysian medical graduates went to Singapore after graduating, said Health deputy director-general (Medical) Datuk Dr S. Jeyaindran.

"In comparison, Singapore's training programme is a continuous process and enables a doctor to sub-specialise at a faster rate," he said.

On Friday, *The Star* reported that top medical graduates were offered jobs by Singapore even before they graduated, with some 10 to 20 Universiti Malaya and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia medical students getting conditional offers.

This was because some doctors claimed that the six-to-eight-month wait for housemanship was too long and those who did not want to wait had taken up offers from Singapore.

Dr Jeyaindran said in Malaysia, some medical officers were stuck at their level because there were 3,500 of them applying for about 1,000 slots for master's programmes each year.

He said Singapore has a three-to-four year residency programme for internal medicine

and another sub-speciality programme before they became specialists.

According to the Singapore Health Ministry, a house officer or medical officer could apply for the residency programme.

To stem the flow of Malaysian medical graduates and doctors to Singapore, Dr Jeyaindran said the ministry was trying to shorten the gap for doctors here.

He said that the ministry was looking at alternative pathways for specialist training.

"While the universities increase the slots available for master's programmes, they must also look at other pathways for doctors to become specialists, whether through fellowship or membership of the Royal Colleges in the United Kingdom," he said.

Dr Jeyaindran said currently, urology had started producing specialists this way and others would offer similar alternative pathways in the near future.

"We are increasing the parallel pathways. The Royal College of Surgeons has agreed to develop a curriculum with us and recognise some of our senior consultants as trainers in this programme.

"We are in the process of finalising the implementation of the programme," he said.

Meanwhile, he said the training of internal medicine specialists has been ongoing for many years and the ministry was looking at fine tuning it to ensure trainees would get well-rounded exposure to internal medicines.