



Patron: His Royal Highness, Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah

# ACADEMY OF MEDICINE OF MALAYSIA

28 May 2020

## PRESS STATEMENT

### Prioritise Childcare for Healthcare Workers

We refer to the statement released by the [Malaysian Paediatric Association \(MPA\)](#) on 23 May 2020. The Academy of Medicine of Malaysia stands with the MPA in urging the government to revise the standard operating procedures (SOP) on childcare centres by the [Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development \(KPWKM\)](#) dated 22 May 2020.

It is deeply regrettable that the children of healthcare workers (HCW) are encouraged to stay home while day care centres and nurseries plan to reopen for other children. Childcare for HCWs should be prioritised, as reflected in the [United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) guidelines. The CDC states that if childcare centres cannot fulfil necessary physical distancing measures for all children, childcare centres should “consider serving only the children of healthcare workers and first responders”. This is in stark contrast with the SOP by KPWKM which states that the best arrangement for children of HCWs is at-home care.

The government must fulfil its responsibility to support the frontline HCWs who have served the country during the COVID-19 crisis. This includes providing solutions for childcare. The reopening of childcare centres must prioritise admission for children of HCWs who will continue to work in the frontlines. If the necessary precautionary measures cannot be met and at-home care is the only option, the government must provide additional support as not everyone has a family caregiver at home. Frontline HCWs should be given a childcare allowance as hiring a private caregiver can be costly. Besides financial support, there must also be a resource for HCWs to access qualified caregivers who are available for hire.

Finally, based on the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) last mention of COVID-19 infections among HCWs on [23 April 2020](#), HCWs made up 5.8% of total infections in the country and a vast majority of them (70%) did not get infected at work. Frontline HCWs take great care to fulfil precautionary measures, such as wearing full personal protective equipment (PPE), face shields and maintaining good hygiene, as determined by MOH. So, while it is irrefutable that frontline HCWs work in high-risk conditions, the government must take greater care in addressing the risk-status of HCWs and their families to avoid stigmatisation.

We therefore reiterate the MPA’s call for the government to revise the SOP on childcare centres. The government must prioritise childcare for HCWs and lead the Rakyat in firmly condemning stigmatisation of the frontline HCWs who have helped save lives during this pandemic.

#### **We, the under-signed:**

**Academy of Medicine of Malaysia** (Professor Dr Rosmawati Mohamed, Master)  
College of Anaesthesiologists (Dato Dr Jahizah Hassan, President)  
College of Dental Specialists (Professor Dato’ Dr Lian Chin Boon, President)  
College of Emergency Physicians (Dr Ridzuan Dato’ Mohd Isa, President)  
College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (Dr Michael Samy, President)  
College of Ophthalmologists (Dr Nur Fariza Ngah, President)  
College of Paediatrics (Professor Dr Thong Meow Keong, President)  
College of Pathologists (Professor Dr Cheong Soon Keng, President)  
College of Physicians (Dr Letchuman Ramanathan, President)  
College of Public Health Medicine (Dato’ Indera Dr Sha’ari Ngadiman, President)  
College of Radiology (Dr Amir Fuad Hussain, President)  
College of Surgeons (Professor Dr April Camilla Roslani, President)

**(The Academy of Medicine of Malaysia, embracing 11 Colleges and 15 Chapters, is a registered body representing all the medical specialists in Malaysia)**

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