



STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR DOCTORS: MOHH HMD × SMA DIT Forum

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The annual MOH Holdings (MOHH) Healthcare Manpower Division (HMD) × SMA Doctors-in-Training (DIT) Forum, held in October 2025, provided a valuable platform for open dialogue on issues affecting our junior doctors. The meeting was attended by SMA DIT Committee members, MOHH officials and student leaders from the various local medical societies.

We share here a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting.

Establishing guidelines for department manpower planning

One of the concerns raised during the National Wellness Committee for Junior Doctors discussions was the varied manpower planning practices across departments. SMA DIT Committee's assessment is that a set of overarching guidelines, formulated together with MOHH HMD, could help establish common manpower planning principles for departments to align with. Such

guidelines would help MOHH HMD's manpower distribution principles to be percolated down to and felt by the ground, promoting fairness among department manpower deployment. The guidelines will be formulated based on a review of existing literature and best practices, similar to prior SMA guidelines such as the SMA Guideline on Fees for Doctors in Private Practice in Singapore, and the SMA Medical Guidelines on Fitness to Drive.

Enhancing support for IMGs

SMA and MOHH both shared about the initiatives each has put in place to help junior doctors. For example, the SMA DIT Committee currently conducts annual workshops for house officers and medical officers. These workshops, along with resources such as the SMA DIT 101 digital pocketbook, are accessible by all SMA Members and have historically supported a significant number of international medical graduates (IMGs). In parallel, MOHH currently works with hospitals to provide workshops for

returning IMGs and is considering a standardised orientation programme. Discussions were held regarding how to better support our junior doctors and the potential for future collaboration.

Exemption of pregnant doctors from night duties

Inconsistent practices regarding the exemption of pregnant doctors from overnight calls and night shifts were raised as a concern. While some departments provide automatic exemptions during a certain stage of pregnancy, others require memos from the treating physician, resulting in differing treatments and additional administrative burden on pregnant doctors. SMA DIT Committee recommended that MOHH HMD issue guidance for a reasonable timepoint from which pregnant doctors can be exempted from night duties, from which hospital departments could take reference while retaining flexibility in implementation.

Improving the health status declaration process

A key concern raised was the phrasing of the health status declaration in MOHH's employment form, which could be misconstrued as discriminatory and/or discourage doctors from declaring their health conditions. SMA DIT Committee provided suggested amendments to the MOHH health status declaration. The suggested amendments aim to: (1) clarify the intent of the declaration to be to plan postings/rotations more effectively; (2) reassure doctors that their health information would be treated with utmost confidentiality; and (3) ensure that MOHH's work practices remain fair and within the legal limits of Singapore Law (see Workplace Fairness Act 2025, part 3, paras 15–16 and part 4, paras 17–18).

Ensuring compliance with transport claim policies

One of the concerns raised was that some departments imposed additional limits on transport claims, in contravention of

MOHH's policy. This has resulted in doctors in certain departments being unable to claim for transport despite them needing to start work before 6.30 am in view of the heavy clinical workload. SMA DIT Committee suggested for MOHH HMD to identify errant departments and to issue a reminder for departments to comply with MOHH's transport claim policy.

Clarifying timelines for work-related claims

SMA DIT Committee was informed through engagements on feedback regarding the timeline for the processing of work-related claims. The main concern was for rejection of claims that could be due to factors outside the doctor's control (eg, delayed approval by department claims approver). MOHH gave reassurance that doctors will not be held liable for delayed claims due to factors beyond their control, and that an appeals process existed for these circumstances. SMA DIT Committee

suggested for MOHH HMD to include this important clarification into the MOHH handbook for employees.

Improving accessibility of pre-employment grant interviews

Finally, feedback from IMGs highlighted logistical challenges in attending pre-employment grant interviews in Australia. Some cited difficulties in flying across the country for interviews. Consideration for conducting interviews in more locations was suggested to improve accessibility and reduce travel burden.

The discussions at the forum underscore the importance of continued engagement between stakeholders to address structural issues thoughtfully and collaboratively. SMA DIT Committee remains committed to advocating for practical, fair and doctor-centred manpower policies, and looks forward to working closely with MOHH HMD to translate these discussions into meaningful improvements for MOHH employees. ♦

About us

The SMA DIT Committee advocates for junior doctors and medical students, and runs a wide range of initiatives to support them in becoming competent, confident and compassionate healthcare professionals.

The Committee has spoken up and provided recommendations on working hour caps, night call allowances and the float system, leave for National Service call-ups, postgraduate training opportunities, the process for full registration, and junior doctor engagement.

In addition to these advocacy efforts, the Committee operates an "Ask Me Anything" channel, publishes the DIT 101 digital pocketbook (smadit101.glide.page), conducts "starter pack" workshops for junior doctors, and organises events for the Medical Association of South East Asian Nations Junior Doctors Network as well as supports the SMA National Medical Students' Convention.

Join our DIT Telegram channel [@helpourjuniordocs](https://t.me/helpourjuniordocs) and follow our Instagram page [@jrdocs.sg](https://www.instagram.com/jrdocs.sg) to stay up to date regarding our various initiatives. If you are keen to get involved with SMA DIT Committee's efforts, please write in to us at ilj@sma.org.sg.