



Medical students learning how the **human heart works**. The government will ensure that all universities offering medicine have **access to a teaching hospital**. Pic by Zulfa Mohamad

# Ministry emphasises quality of medical training

**MEDICAL HARDWARE:** Government to ensure adequate facilities at universities

## KUALA LUMPUR

**T**HERE is no need to push the panic button as the Higher Education Ministry is very much aware of the oversupply of doctors in the near future.

Deputy Higher Education Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said: "The question with training too many doctors in a short period of time, and the quality of the skills acquired by the doctor during their rushed training does not arise.

"Instead of stopping the medical training schemes, the ministry had been focusing on improving the quality of medical graduates despite the growing number."

He said the problem with having

too many medical students was that each student would not get the necessary attention and exposure from their lecturers.

"To overcome this problem, the ministry has been working hard to ensure that each university that offers medical courses have their own medical training centre," Saifuddin said.

"For example, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) is in the final stages of negotiations with Serdang Hospital to turn it into a fully-fledged teaching hospital."

He said that way, the lecturer-to-student ratio could be kept at optimum levels, ensuring the students were exposed to the practical aspects of medicine.

Saifuddin said the ministry was confident that public and private universities would eventually have access to medical centres to conduct their practical studies within the next few years.

Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Mary Cardoso said the government must be vigilant in monitoring the high number of institutions offering medical courses.

She said the country must not merely "churn out" medical graduates in an uncontrolled manner.

She warned that doctors could not be "trained in a hurry" as she believed there were not enough medical officers to properly train housemen.

"The houseman to medical officer ratio of 5:1 was ideal, but now we have reports of up to 12 housemen per officer."

She said the government had wrongly allocated the housemen

based on the total number of specialists in a hospital, when they should only count the specialists in the fields of medicine, surgery, orthopaedics, paediatrics, obstetrics/gynaecology and emergency/anaesthesia.

"Specialist areas like pathology and radiology do not take housemen for training, but somehow their numbers were also included in the count, resulting in a disproportionately large number of housemen allocated for each medical centre."

She urged the government to place more emphasis on specialist doctors training rather than producing just medical graduates.

Also, she urged the government to give more incentives for doctors who were willing to serve in rural areas as the distribution of doctors between rural and urban areas was not optimal.