

Malaysia Health Care System

Public and private sector providers play an important role in the provision of health-care services in Malaysia. In the public sector, the MOH is the main government agency responsible for providing healthcare services in the country. Other ministries that also provide health-care services in the countries are the Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Internal Affairs, and Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. The health system is highly centralized with most planning and organization of health services being carried out centrally.

There are four types of hospitals in the public sector under the MOH: district hospitals, state general hospitals, national referral center and special institutions, and non-MOH hospitals. The district hospitals typically have between 100 and 200 beds, and are normally run by 6 to 10 medical officers. State general hospitals have 500 to 1500 beds. Each state has one state general hospital except for the state of Sabah, which has two. These hospitals provide outpatient and inpatient care in general surgery, pediatrics, medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and psychiatry. Services are provided by both specialist and non-specialist medical officers.

The National Referral Center is the highest level of hospital in the hierarchy. This hospital has 2800 beds and is located in Kuala Lumpur. Although it receives referrals from other parts of the country, especially for cases which need specialized care not available in state general hospital, such as neurosurgery and radiotherapy, it also provides outpatient and inpatient care for the surrounding population.

There are seven special medical institutions that provide inpatient services for specific diseases in the country: the National Tuberculosis Center, the Hospital for Leprosy, and five mental hospitals. Private health providers in Malaysia can be divided into four main groups: private practitioners, private hospitals, private nongovernmental organizations, and practitioners of traditional medicine.

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Private practitioners are registered doctors who provide services through private clinics. Currently, there are 5642 private general practitioners clinics and 535 private specialist clinics in Malaysia. Private hospitals are licensed under the Private Hospital Act of 1971 and defined as any private facility with more than one bed. There were great variations in the size of the hospitals in the country, ranging from 2 to 406.

Public health services are financed mainly from taxes on earned income. Other sources of financing for health services are private voluntary insurance, social security, and user fees. Private voluntary insurance is gaining popularity now because there is no compulsory insurance or NHI in Malaysia yet at the moment. It is estimated at least one-quarter of the population is covered by some form of voluntary health insurance in Malaysia.

Highly subsidized user fees are charged for inpatient and outpatient services in all public hospitals. Under the MOH fee schedule, patients are charged RM 1.00 for treatment in general outpatient clinic, and RM 5.00 for specialist care in public hospitals. Services in the health centers of rural health units are free of charge. Charges for inpatient care are capped at the maximum of RM 500 per admission in third class wards of public hospitals.