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HEALTHCARE IN MALAYSIA

FAQ Booklet on Hiring of Foreign
Medical Specialists in Malaysia



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ABBREVIATIONS

MMC	Malaysian Medical Council
MOH/MOHM	Ministry of Health, Malaysia
MPC	Malaysia Productivity Corporation
NSR	National Specialist Register
PHPN	Private Healthcare Productivity Nexus



INTRODUCTION

THE QUESTION OF THE NEED FOR FOREIGN MEDICAL SPECIALISTS IN MALAYSIA

While Malaysia is arguably one of the best places for overall healthcare in the world, at certain times, in certain regions of the country or for certain fields the nation may have a shortage of or an additional need for particular medical specialists.

Ideally of course, the nation and indeed every nation in the world aspires to be self-sufficient in having enough doctors including all medical specialists from among its own citizenry. Practically of course, this has not always been the case even among large nations, what more smaller ones, while Malaysia is comparatively medium-sized.

Thus, it is a given that for any country, large or small, there may exist instances where the country would have a need for certain specialists. It could be an extra need for specialists who are available but the numbers are insufficient, or even sometimes possibly a case where the country does not have a particularly specialised medical expertise among its own specialists.

In all such cases, it is perfectly understandable that specialist foreign expertise may need to be brought in. Yet the country has to have a fair balance in fulfilling the nation's needs for all types of medical treatment for its entire population, even by importing foreign specialists where needed, while ensuring that local doctors and specialists are given the best opportunity to grow with and for the nation.

So how do we ensure such a balance in securing the best development of local medical specialists, while bringing in foreign expertise expeditiously and efficiently when truly necessary? This FAQ booklet helps to answer some Frequently Asked Questions on the hiring of foreign medical specialists in Malaysia.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1 Are foreign medical specialists allowed to work in Malaysia?

Generally, yes but there must be a need for them which cannot be fulfilled by local specialists, and they must fulfil all the conditions and requirements in place at the time of application.
- 2 Is there a need for foreign medical specialists in Malaysia?

It depends on the time or place (e.g. region or state) or field of specialisation in the country, which may be facing a lack or shortage of specialists in a particular time, place or expertise and thus creating a need for foreign medical specialists.
- 3 What are the basic conditions for foreign specialists to work in Malaysia?

The foreign medical specialist must possess the recognised specialist qualifications in addition to fulfilling other professional conditions as required by relevant bodies such as the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC), the National Specialist Register (NSR) and others, plus other necessities such as Immigration and visa requirements.
- 4 Are there any prerequisites before looking for foreign medical specialists?

Yes, for example, the hospital that wants to hire a foreign specialist must have first advertised at least three (3) times in the local newspapers for a local specialist to take up the position. If there is no response from local specialists then the hospital may proceed with hiring a foreign specialist.
- 5 What are the basic qualifications needed for foreign medical specialists in Malaysia?

In relation to private hospitals, the undergraduate degree and medical registration of the foreign specialist must be recognised by Malaysia, namely by the Malaysian Medical Council (MMC). Should the undergraduate degree not be in the list of recognised qualifications, the candidate may still apply but their post-graduate qualifications must be registrable with the National Specialist Register (NSR) before they can be considered for the position.



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6 What if the foreign medical specialist's basic qualifications are not recognised?

If the foreign specialist's basic qualifications are not recognised while it is reasonably clear that the candidate is in practice already highly qualified and has been practicing for a long time with proven experience, ultimately under certain circumstances the Minister of Health has the power of discretion to give the candidate permission to practice and as such would be allowed.

7 Are there any particular categories or list of specialisations for foreign specialists to be registered under?

Yes, there are categories or clauses that permit the specialist to be hired. For example, the NSR has a list of registered post-graduate specialisation qualifications that are recognised. As such, if the specialist falls under categories in the registered list there will be no issue in registering them. However, if the speciality is not under the NSR's current registerable list then a problem may arise, which even local specialists may equally face. For example, 'Immunology' does not yet fall

under the current NSR list. As a result, rare but required specialists who do not fall under existing categories set out in the NSR such as Immunologists may still be registered, but under the closest general category i.e. 'Internal Medicine'.

8 If a foreign medical specialist is registrable under only a particular category, can he still practice under his actual designation of expertise?

In the case where for example a foreign Immunologist is registered and practices in Malaysia under the category of 'Internal Medicine' specialist as to whether he can still be designated as practicing 'Immunology'. Officially this cannot be done. However, MMC recognises that it is a possibility under 'Hospital Level Privileging'.



9 What are other specific requirements for foreign medical specialists to practice in Malaysia, such as for understudy?

The following are some of the specific requirements that foreign specialists would be required to adhere to in their practice in Malaysia:

- a. For the MMC, as long as there is a qualified person to sponsor the foreign specialist then that qualified person will be responsible and cover for the specialist. Noted that the specialist's purpose of coming to Malaysia would have already been approved by the MMC.
- b. A foreign specialist coming to work in Malaysia would be required to understudy a local specialist for a period of time and his capabilities will be based on the cases he carries out.
- c. For full registration a six (6) month appraisal is required for the understudy. For NSR certification, which is a separate issue, evaluation will be carried out every three months which will be done by the hospital.

10 What are the specific requirements for foreign medical specialists to be able to practice in Malaysian hospitals?

- a. For private hospitals bringing in specialists from overseas, the foreign specialists are required to have at least 5 years post-fellowship in a particular discipline before they are registered and hired. This criterion also applies for NSR where they would already need to have the certification.
- b. For foreign specialists the only issue is to apply and obtain the NSR registration with the relevant documentation so that they can be employed. The hospital hiring them will also need to prove that there is no available specialist in the country and there were no takers for the job after the requisite advertisement. It is only then that MMC will give approval to bring the foreign specialist in.



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11 What are the requirements for foreign medical specialists who do their training in Malaysia?

For foreign specialists who complete their training in Malaysia, they would be required to fulfil two (2) years post-qualification experience before they are placed on the NSR. For those with already accepted post-qualifications from overseas, this would not be an issue.

12 What are the requirements for Malaysian citizens with foreign qualification and experience returning to Malaysia as medical specialists?

In the case of Malaysian specialists who are qualified and working in a foreign country, they would have to apply for NSR status while they are there and if they qualify would be able to return to Malaysia without facing any problems. Ultimately, the specialist would receive both MMC and NSR registration and can return to the country as a specialist.

13 Are there any particular countries where their qualifications are accepted by Malaysia for medical specialist status?

Pertaining to post graduate qualifications, only those from Australia, Canada, Singapore, United Kingdom and the United States of America are currently accepted. However as far as post-graduate qualification is concerned, as long as the candidate is under the requisite supervision of the private hospital and under a private specialist for basic registration and is NSR registerable, the candidate can apply regardless of the country of qualification.

14 Are there any other policies regarding the country of the qualification of foreign medical specialists wanting to be hired by Malaysian hospitals?

MMC observes a basic principle of reciprocity, namely "if Malaysia allows your specialist in then your country must also recognise Malaysian specialists", although nonetheless each foreign applicant will be evaluated on their own case's merits.



15 What are the requirements for foreign medical investors wanting to bring in their own specialists to practice in their medical investment in Malaysia?

In the event of a foreign entity investing in a medical centre in Malaysia requesting to bring in foreign specialists, currently there is no fixed percentage on the number of foreign specialists that can be brought in vis-à-vis local specialists. However they are subject to the same requirements and conditions in which they need to prove that their specialists have the right qualifications and experience and are registerable under the NSR.

16 What other avenues are available if a foreign medical specialist cannot be registered in Malaysia?

In instances where the specialist qualification is accepted elsewhere but not in Malaysia i.e. the government criteria will not recognise the qualification, then the MMC will not register the person as that is the prerequisite requirement. A remaining avenue to overcome this situation would be to appeal to the Minister of Health and in this case the Minister can only allow the specialist to register as a Medical Officer who cannot be registered under the NSR as the specialist requirements are still not fulfilled. Ultimately, said foreign specialist cannot practice as a specialist per se in Malaysia.

RELEVANT LINKS

Ministry of Health Malaysia
www.moh.gov.my

Malaysian Medical Council
<https://mmc.gov.my/>

National Specialist Register
<https://www.nsr.org.my/home.html>

Immigration Department Malaysia
<https://www.imi.gov.my/>

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[client to be add, or provide information for writing - noted to list e.g. Ministry of Health, Malaysian Medical Council, National Specialist Register, Malaysia Productivity Centre, Private Healthcare Productivity Nexus...]





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