

LETTERS ON

RESIDENTS' RESERVIST TRAINING LEAVE

The SMA Doctors-in-Training Committee received feedback from residents that reservist leave is currently considered in their total number of days of absence from medical training in some sponsoring institutions and specialties. If male trainee doctors' national service (NS) duties stretch for a longer period of time (ie, high-key reservist training), it could potentially delay the completion of their traineeship and in turn, career prospects.

SMA sought advice from all three sponsoring institutions' designated institutional officials (DIOs) about leave criterion within their organisations, and they reassured us that they have been abiding by the Ministry of Health's (MOH) training circular about guidelines for the absence from training for residents. In addition, programme directors

would generally assign residents who are going for reservist in a longer posting so as to avoid any delay in their medical traineeship.

The Association recognises that it is crucial for the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) to be aware of the views raised by their NSmen as well, so that both MINDEF and MOH could work together to address their concerns. SMA's letter to Mr Maliki Bin Osman, who is Chairman of the Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence (ACCORD); copied to Ms Kwa Hui Teng, Head of ACCORD, and Dr Lau Hong Choon, Director, Manpower Standards and Development Division, MOH is reproduced below. This is followed by an email reply from the office of the Permanent Secretary (Defence).

6 April 2016

SMA's Letter to ACCORD

Dear Mr Maliki Bin Osman,

Singapore Medical Association is the representative professional body for medical professionals in Singapore. Among our members are residents (doctors in training) who have completed their studies and are undergoing training in the respective restructured hospitals/training institutions.

Under MOH Training Circular 10/2010 issued on the 23 August 2010, it is indicated that the total number of days of absence from training cannot exceed "X" days, following which, the posting has to be repeated. We note that "NS Leave" is interpreted by the training institutions to be part of the days of absence from training, and will therefore negatively impact the timely completion of the resident's training. For example, a 14 day high-key training in the midst of a posting of four months will cause the resident/NSman to exceed the allowable days of absence.

For your information, if the total number of days of absence from training exceed the stipulated days per the MOH Training Circular 10/2010, the residents can be made to do a repeat posting or extended posting, therefore delaying the completion of his traineeship and career prospects compared to their peers who do not have NS requirements.

We hope that ACCORD can engage with MOH in this regard and work out a favourable outcome so that the residents/NSman will not be penalised in his workplace for serving his NS obligations in the future.

Dr Daniel Lee
Honorary Secretary
Singapore Medical Association

