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Bolstering Productivity of Private GPs in Malaysia with Liberalisation of Mental Health Service

7 February 2023, Petaling Jaya - The liberalisation of mental health services is anticipated to improve the productivity of the private healthcare subsector to be at par with the national average in the next five years. This initiative could help private general practitioners (GPs) in Malaysia enter a new market, diversify their services, and utilise the existing resources more efficiently, thus increasing the firm productivity.

Dato' Abdul Latif Haji Abu Seman, Director General, Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) said, "This proposed initiative can be the game-changer in productivity performance of the private healthcare subsector. Private GPs, constituting more than 8,000 establishments in Malaysia, can play a more significant role in bolstering the productivity of this subsector".

In 2021, the value-added productivity per employee recorded by the private healthcare subsector was at RM64,259, which was significantly below the national average of RM90,697. This performance has been taking place for the past five (5) years since 2017.

Public-private partnership in mental health service delivery has been identified as one of the critical solutions to improve the productivity of this subsector, as well as offer more options for prevention and health promotion for Malaysians, especially the youth.

"Satisfying social needs through health service delivery is frequently viewed as a core governmental responsibility. Hence it is subject to close control and restriction. However, due to some limitations of human and financial resources at public sector, the public-private partnership is necessary to ensure the *rakyat* receives timely intervention on mental health issues", Dato' Latif added.

It is reported that Malaysia recorded a spike of 81% or 1,142 suicide cases last year compared to 631 cases in 2020. The government's Psychosocial Support Helpline also received 307,673 calls, of which 227,713 calls (74.3 percent) were requested for emotional support and counselling due to chronic stress, depression, and anxiety during the pandemic as of September 2021.

Dato' Jacob Thomas, Champion of Private Healthcare Productivity Nexus (PHPN) said, "Malaysia can benchmark on how Australia addresses mental issues with an emphasis on investing initially in the least intensive and least expensive treatment. This approach is obviously consistent with the overall focus on prevention and early intervention in youth mental health".

“Private GPs in Malaysia can serve as frontliners providing friendly community-based service such as, health information, support, counselling, and screening for mental disorders. As such, greater investment in mental health competency training should be supported and formally included as part of accreditation processes for the primary health care workforce”, Dato’ Jacob added.

PHPN conducted benchmarking mission to Sydney, Australia, on innovative public-private partnerships solutions towards more remarkable productivity growth of private healthcare in Malaysia.

This mission aims to identify the new ultimate source of productivity gains for the private healthcare subsector based on the best practices derived from the solid public-private partnership practised in the Australian healthcare system.

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About Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC)

Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) is a statutory body under the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI). MPC promotes productivity, quality and competitiveness to the industries and organisations in Malaysia. MPC's vision is to be the leading organisation in productivity enhancement for global competitiveness and innovation.