

MEDIA RELEASE

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ASIAN CLINICAL RESEARCH NETWORK LAUNCHES INAUGURAL INFECTIOUS DISEASE SYMPOSIUM

***More than 100 delegates from 17 countries will gather to discuss the
'slow burn pandemic' of antimicrobial resistance***

Singapore — Top experts from around the globe will offer insights into how countries can prevent and treat infectious diseases at the ADVANCE-ID Launch Symposium, which opens on 27 February.

The symposium is organised by ADVANcing Clinical Evidence in Infectious Diseases (ADVANCE-ID), a network of more than 30 hospitals across Asia collaborating in the conduct of clinical research in infectious diseases.

ADVANCE-ID, set up in March 2022 with a \$2.5 million grant from the Wellcome Trust and matching funds from Singapore's academic institutions, will be officially launched by its director, Professor David Paterson, at the symposium. The network aims to improve and strengthen clinical research capabilities in the region.

Professor Kenneth Mak, Director of Medical Services at Singapore's Ministry of Health, will open the symposium.

Over two days at the NUSS Kent Ridge Guild House, talks by more than a dozen distinguished guests and thought leaders will centre on the theme of the threat faced by antimicrobial resistance in an era of a dwindling supply of new antibiotics.

More than 100 delegates who are infectious disease physicians, microbiologists and clinical researchers will be at the symposium, which aims to provide a platform for greater collaboration among hospitals in Asia.

AMR as global health challenge

Antimicrobial resistance, or AMR, occurs when microbes become resistant to the medications used to treat the infections they cause. These drug-resistant infections are a global health issue that could be exacerbated by responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prof Paterson said: "One thing which COVID-19 has taught us is that no country should ever consider itself immune from the infectious diseases occurring in any other country. The pandemic has made us realise that we need to take a regional approach to infectious diseases management and prevention."

"AMR is what we might call a slow burn pandemic. It may not cause nationwide lockdowns like we saw with COVID-19, but its impact may, over time, be even greater to our hospitals and healthcare systems."

The programmes at the symposium include panel discussions and breakout sessions on research priorities for clinicians in ADVANCE-ID, which has its operational headquarters in the National University of Singapore Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

Dr Phoebe Williams from The University of Sydney will put the spotlight on neonatal sepsis. She will present data showing that more than half of babies born in low-income settings across Asia who develop hospital-acquired infections will die.

The paediatrician and infectious diseases specialist now works closely with a number of hospitals in South-east Asia and the Pacific on projects to reduce AMR in paediatric and neonatal infections.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the field of diagnostics has also come to the forefront, with many using rapid test kits to monitor themselves for infections, for instance.

The use of rapid diagnostics for AMR will be raised by two experts, Dr Shradha Subedi from Sunshine Coast University Hospital in Australia and Dr Witchiuda Kamolvit from Siriraj Hospital and Mahidol University in Thailand. With rapid diagnosis, appropriate antibiotics can be directed to patients who truly need them.

Dr Timothy Jinks, Head of Infectious Disease Interventions at Wellcome Trust, said: “The scale of the challenge posed by AMR is rising, threatening millions of lives around the world. ADVANCE-ID is playing a critical role in bringing together researchers across Asia to strengthen capacity for new, life-saving research in this area. This will not only support the development of new drugs to combat AMR, but will also improve our understanding of how best to prescribe and safeguard our supply of antibiotics, helping to protect some of the communities most affected by this escalating health threat.”

Associate Professor Danny Soon, Executive Director at the Singapore Clinical Research Institute (SCRI) and Chief Executive Officer at the Consortium for Clinical Research and Innovation, Singapore, said: “Clinical research networks such as ADVANCE-ID provide valuable opportunities for healthcare institutions across Asia to come together and study how to change the way we prevent, diagnose and treat infections, which would not have been possible with single sites. It also provides a platform for academia, industry and governments to engage in collaborative partnerships to address pressing issues of global concern, such as AMR and hospital-acquired infections.

“SCRI is committed to provide clinical trial and operational support to ADVANCE-ID as it addresses this critically important and relevant area of prevention and management of infectious diseases,” he added.

Chinese Glossary

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About the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health

Building upon decades of experience in research, training and practice in epidemiology and public health, the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH), under the National University of Singapore, was established in October 2011 as Singapore's national school of public health. The School is also a member of the National University Health System (NUHS).

The School aims to continually foster healthier communities in Singapore and the region, and impact public health programmes and policies through its robust educational programmes and translational cross-disciplinary research work on cohort studies and life course epidemiology, infectious disease research, health technology assessments, health promotion, workplace safety and health, health systems evaluation and health services research. An interdisciplinary approach, augmented by rigorous training, applicable research and regional partnerships, places SSHSPH at the forefront of public health knowledge discovery and practice in Asia.

The School actively collaborates with many partners including the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Harvard School of Public Health and University of Michigan School of Public Health. Its flagship programme, the Master of Public Health degree, attracts students from a wide range of disciplines from within Singapore and throughout the region.

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