NMRC National Medical Research Council Singapore

THE SCOPE

LATEST NEWS & EVENTS @ NMRC

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Events

Honouring Excellence in Healthcare and Community Care

Highlights from National Medical Excellence Awards 2025

NMEA 2025 award winners with Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Health and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies, and senior management from the Ministry of Health. Mr Ong is also the Patron of NMEA.

The National Medical Excellence Awards (NMEA) 2025 ceremony took place on 19 September 2025 evening, at Capella Singapore. Jointly organised by the National Medical Research Council (NMRC) Office and National University Health System (NUHS), the event honoured outstanding clinicians, clinician scientists, and other healthcare professionals who advanced Singapore's standards in care quality, patient safety, research, education, training, and community health.

This year's recipients were recognised for their significant contributions spanning neurology, cardiology, urology, postgraduate and undergraduate clinical education across multiple disciplines, and for transforming primary and preventive care delivery, as well as empowering individuals living with dementia and autism.

Minister for Health and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies, Mr Ong Ye Kung, as the patron of the awards, graced the awards ceremony alongside the recipients' families, and distinguished leaders of Singapore's healthcare, community care and research institutions.

The evening featured heartfelt acceptance speeches from the awardees and video interviews with their colleagues, who shared heartwarming stories about the winners' dedication to their professions. Performances by NUHS's musical talents, ranging from soprano and acapella to harp and keyboard, added a celebratory note and warmth to the evening. The event concluded with group photo sessions for each healthcare cluster, creating lasting mementos of the occasion.

> **"This year, we honour four outstanding individuals and three exemplary teams... While we honour their achievements tonight, let's also remember that they represent the many healthcare professionals who strive for excellence, and uphold the standards and reputation of Singapore healthcare."**
>
> **Mr Ong Ye Kung**
> **Minister for Health and Coordinating Minister for Social Policies**

NMEA 2025 once again shone a spotlight on the people behind Singapore's healthcare excellence, whose passion, innovation, and dedication continue to improve lives and inspire future generations.

The details of NMEA 2025 award recipients and those from the previous years are available on **NMRC Events webpage**.

Left to right: Group shots of NHG Health, NUHS and SingHealth colleagues who attended the NMEA 2025 event.

Latest News

Strengthening the Talent Pipeline

A Conversation with Our Clinician Scientist Residents

On 15 October 2025, NMRC Office organised a Clinician Scientist (CS) Residents Engagement Session led by NMRC Executive Director, Prof Tan Say Beng and the then Director of the Ministry of Health (MOH)'s Manpower Standards & Development (MS&D) division, Dr Lam Meng Chon. The session brought together CS Residents from different cohorts to share feedback on their research journeys. It aimed to draw insights from their training experiences so that MOH and NMRC Office can better support the needs of CS Residents.

NMRC Executive Director speaking to CS Residents invited to the engagement session.

An interactive moment from the CS Residents Engagement Session.

Held at MOH Holdings (MOHH)'s office at Elementum, NMRC Office hosted 11 CS Residents together with colleagues from MOH's MS&D and MOHH's Healthcare Manpower division.

During the session, Prof Tan introduced NMRC funding schemes and discussed how these schemes, together with cluster-level programmes, could support CS Residents in their research careers. NMRC Office also shared findings from a recent survey of CS Residents, after which the past and present residents discussed their experiences in the CS Residency programme.

Participating CS Residents said that they found the session valuable in providing them with a meaningful channel to express their views. They also appreciated the opportunity to learn more about funding schemes that could support their research endeavours and were eager to participate in future engagement activities.

NMRC Office plans to continue dialogues with CSs to ensure that their evolving needs are addressed as CSs progress through their research careers and contribute to Singapore's healthcare research and innovation landscape.

CS Residents with NMRC Executive Director and MOH's MS&D Director, together with MOH and MOHH colleagues who joined them for the engagement session.

Meet the Clinician Scientist

Breathing New Life into Research

A Conversation with A/Prof Sanjay Chotirmall

A clinician scientist and educator, A/Prof Sanjay Chotirmall brings together clinical insight and scientific curiosity to progress respiratory medicine. Trained in Ireland and now serving as Vice Dean (Research) at Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, NTU Singapore and Consultant at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, he has earned an international reputation for his work on infection, inflammation, and the lung microbiome.

Q What first inspired you to pursue respiratory medicine and research?

Early in my career, I cared for a young patient with cystic fibrosis. She passed away at 18 years old from complex infection. It left a deep impression on me because she should have been enjoying life at her age. Yet, she spent nine out of 12 months in an inpatient bedroom, consistently on intravenous antibiotics. More than 20 years later, we now have oral drugs that correct the genetic defect causing this disease. Seeing how science transformed what was once a fatal illness showed me the power of translational research.

Q Your Clinician Scientist Award focuses on chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Could you explain the "chicken or egg" question behind this study?

COPD is often diagnosed too late, when lung damage is irreversible. We know that patients have abnormal mucus and an imbalanced microbiome, but we do not know which comes first. My study focuses on detecting very early, even pre-symptomatic disease, to determine whether mucus dysfunction triggers microbial imbalance or vice versa. Answering that question can reshape how we detect and prevent COPD.

Q What do you find most rewarding about your work as a clinician scientist?

Seeing science translate into real benefits for patients. When a discovery from the laboratory improves how we diagnose or treat disease, it makes every sacrifice worthwhile. I also take great pride in mentoring young researchers. Watching them grow into independent clinician scientists is more fulfilling than any paper or award.

Q You are leading The Academic Respiratory Initiative for Pulmonary Health (TARIPH) programme. What does success look like for this initiative?

Success means building something that lasts. TARIPH aims to develop sustainable infrastructure for respiratory research, nurture a strong talent pipeline, and involve patients not only as participants but as partners in shaping research questions. Ultimately, research should exist for patients, not the other way around.

Q What future directions are you most excited about?

I am exploring how climate change and air quality affect respiratory health. We have discovered that the air has its own microbiome, a living ecosystem that changes with pollution. Understanding this could help us protect patients in a world of environmental change.

Q What guiding principle has shaped your journey as a clinician scientist?

I believe in staying hungry and humble. In research, rejection is inevitable. Research projects may fail and papers may be turned down, but every "no" teaches you resilience. Persistence, more than anything else, defines success in science.

Ready for the Next Outbreak

PREPARE Strengthens Singapore's Epidemic Defence

When the next outbreak hits, Singapore aims to respond not just swiftly, but strategically. This is the mission of PREPARE, also known as the Programme for Research in Epidemic Preparedness and REsponse, a national programme under the newly set up Communicable Diseases Agency.

From data analytics to diagnostics, PREPARE brings together five Co-operative Programmes and two Cores to power Singapore's epidemic preparedness.

Launched in November 2022, the programme was set up by the Ministry of Health to support and strengthen Singapore's key research capabilities, translational platforms, and expertise. It strives to develop tools, methods and products that can be tapped to detect, respond to, and contain future infectious disease threats.

PREPARE draws on lessons learnt from Singapore's research and development (R&D) response during the COVID-19 pandemic, and seeks to boost Singapore's capability in dealing with future infectious disease threats. PREPARE acts as an ecosystem orchestrator both at the national and regional levels by bringing together researchers and other key stakeholders to close critical gaps in epidemic research and response. This is done through: (i) broad engagement of international stakeholders to inform and enhance Singapore's strategy and initiatives; (ii) deep and regular engagement with local stakeholders; (iii) targeted approach to talent development; and (iv) thoughtful approach to strategic research funding.

The people behind PREPARE: members of the Executive Committee, International Advisory Panel, and key personnel who advance Singapore's epidemic research readiness.

CONNECTING THE REGION THROUGH SCIENCE

PREPARE seeks to build a strong infectious diseases research network within Southeast Asia that enables knowledge exchange and insights sharing, technology transfer, capacity building and research collaboration. Its multipronged approach includes: (i) augmenting existing funding streams by supporting the expansion of local efforts to the region; (ii) leveraging research partnerships with international networks and contributing to regional capability building; and (iii) nurturing relationships with regional research and clinical investigators. PREPARE Regional Networks currently cover 14 clinical study sites in five countries.

LEADING GLOBAL EFFORTS

PREPARE is leading the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Collaborative Open Research Consortium for the Coronavirus family (CORC-CoV), as part of a joint call by WHO and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations for researchers and governments to strengthen and accelerate global research to prepare for the next pandemic. All CORCs are to develop an R&D roadmap for their respective pathogen families by late 2025 to early 2026. Work is underway, with PREPARE leading the coordination of inputs from experts across the world.

FUNDING RESEARCH WITH PURPOSE

In its continuous efforts to engage key stakeholders and domain experts, PREPARE has endeavoured to: (i) enforce the need for multi-disciplinary research through its funding application criteria; and (ii) support non-traditional infectious disease research disciplines and teams, such as engineering and high-performance computing. To date, PREPARE has launched seven open grant calls, and funded over 60 projects across more than 20 institutions.

From nurturing local talent to leading international collaborations, PREPARE exemplifies how strategic research coordination can safeguard public health. With PREPARE's growing regional footprint and global leadership, Singapore is getting ready to respond to the next outbreak.

Through 14 regional clinical study sites, PREPARE strengthens cross-border research partnerships that enhance epidemic preparedness in Southeast Asia.