

Duke-NUS MS joins Global Virus Network as a Centre of Excellence

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A coalition of seven virology research institutions in Singapore, including Duke-NUS Medical School, has been inducted into the Global Virus Network as a Centre of Excellence, joining 42 other Centres of Excellence and seven Affiliates in 27 countries.

The seven virology research institutes comprise Duke-NUS Medical School, the Singapore Immunology Network (SIgN) from A*STAR, the Environmental Health Institute (EHI) from the National Environment Agency, the National Public Health Laboratory (NHPL) of the Ministry of Health, DSO National Laboratories under the Ministry of Defence, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine), and NUS' Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

The announcement was made jointly by Prof. Robert Gallo, MD, co-founder and scientific director of the GVN; Prof. Linfa Wang, PhD, professor & director of the Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme at Duke-NUS and professor at the Duke Global Health Institute; and Prof. Christian Bréchet, MD, PhD, president of the GVN. Said Prof Gallo, who is also the Homer and Martha Gudelsky Distinguished Professor in Medicine and co-founder and director of the Institute of Human Virology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine, a GVN Center of Excellence: "Combining the seven institutions to form GVN's latest Center of Excellence in Singapore was a terrific idea by Prof Linfa Wang. Their combined expertise and location in Southeast Asia is integral to connecting us to virus hotspots in Singapore and the surrounding region."

Prof Wang of Duke-NUS believes that, "our established platforms from pathogen discovery, serological investigation to pathogenesis, animal models, bio-containment (up to Animal Biosafety Level 3) challenge studies, and rapid biomarker assessment of countermeasure agents, strongly positions us in the region to play an important role in all aspects of viral disease investigation. We currently have a large project funded in Southeast Asia by the USA's Defense Threat Reduction Agency, and have just been invited to help in the current investigation of the Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, India. Both initiatives serve as good examples of what the GVN-Singapore Center of Excellence can contribute to global and regional efforts in fighting and containing viral diseases."

The GVN is a global authority and resource for the identification and investigation, interpretation and explanation, control and suppression, of viral diseases posing threats to mankind. It enhances the international capacity for reactive, proactive and interactive activities that address mankind-threatening viruses and addresses a global need for coordinated virology training through scholarly exchange programs for recruiting and training young scientists in human and animal virology. The GVN also serves as a resource to governments and international organizations seeking advice about viral disease threats, prevention or response strategies, and GVN advocates for research and training on virus infections and their many disease manifestations.

Added GVN's Prof Brechot: "We look forward to GVN-Singapore making significant contributions in many areas, especially in rapid responses to outbreaks. It is not common that coalitions in countries come together to form a regional GVN Center of Excellence, and we are delighted that this terrific group of experts came together to become a strong member of the GVN. Their combined research will contribute greatly to our network and encompasses pathogen biology, epidemiology, diagnostics, pathogenesis, structural biology, animal models, counter measures such as vaccines and therapeutics, and a One Health approach to emerging infectious diseases."

The GVN, in partnership with the Fondation Mérieux (FM) and the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover (TiHo), will convene the 10th International Global Virus Network Meeting on Eradication and Control of (Re-)Emerging Viruses in Annecy, France November 28-30.