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Singapore and Australia sign MoU for health cooperation

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Potential areas of collaboration include aged care, primary care, pandemic preparedness, health financing and digital health

Singapore's Minister for Health Ong Ye Kung and Australia Minister for Health and Aged Care Mark Butler have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen health cooperation between Singapore and Australia. This MoU was signed on the sidelines of the G20 Health Ministers' Meeting (HMM) and Joint Finance and Health Ministers' Meeting (JFHMM).

The MoU recognises the common healthcare challenges between the two countries, especially given their ageing populations. Under the MoU, the potential areas of collaboration include aged care, primary care, pandemic preparedness, health financing and digital health.

The G20 HMM discussed strategies to enhance prevention, preparedness and response against health emergencies. During the discussion session, Ong affirmed Singapore's commitment to reduce the inappropriate use of antimicrobials by investing in primary care and strengthening doctor-patient relationships, which can in turn improve health-seeking behaviour and the appropriate use of medication.

During the G20 HMM discussion session on strengthening pharmaceutical cooperation, Ong stressed the importance of taking a global approach to the research, development, and production of medical countermeasures, such as pandemic vaccines. He also cautioned that vaccine protection will inevitably wane and urged countries to publish research and data to stress the importance of continued vaccinations against COVID-19.

At the G20 JFHMM discussion on pandemic financing, Ong highlighted the need to prioritise the funding of surveillance. This includes acquiring abilities to rapidly characterise new pathogens and establish their deadliness, infectiousness, and modes of transmission.