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Leading global scientists launch Pandemic Research Alliance for concerted research & collaboration

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The alliance plans to publish joint research and maximise the impact of its findings to help enhance pandemic preparedness around the globe

World-renowned professors from six leading institutions in four countries have launched the Pandemic Research Alliance (PRA) to drive concerted research into respiratory viruses from animals to humans, improved surveillance, and new solutions to better manage the next pandemic.

This is the first alliance of its kind bringing together scientists from Australia, Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore and the United States. The alliance, which is anchored by Professor Yuen Kwok-Yung, a microbiologist from the University of Hong Kong (HKU) and Chairperson-designate of the alliance, and acclaimed Columbia University AIDS pioneer Professor David Ho, aims to leverage the specific expertise of each institution to produce joint output.

The founding members institutions and representatives of PRA also include Doherty Institute – University of Melbourne, Australia, represented by Professor Sharon Lewin; Duke-National University of Singapore (NUS) Medical School, Singapore, by Professor Wang Linfa; Guangzhou National Laboratory, PRC, by Professor Zhong Nanshan; and Tsinghua University, PRC, by Professor Zhang Linqi. Professor Chen Zhiwei from HKU will serve as PRA Secretary-designate.

The new alliance will focus on assessing the potential for animal viruses to jump to humans using artificially grown organoids, as well as faster tests to detect the first human case infected by a novel virus with pandemic potential, and to design drug treatment and vaccines pre-emptively before such outbreaks.

Members will share information on emerging infectious agents for early outbreak alerts, as well as research materials and reagents to provide a rapid research response. Aims for the next pandemic include ensuring early alerts, responses and control through rapid molecular testing, minimising mortality with a broad spectrum of antiviral or neutralising antibodies and developing a universal vaccine platform to manufacture a specific vaccine in the shortest possible time frame. Through this research output, the alliance hopes that normal life could be maintained if there is another pandemic, with no city lockdowns

or school closures.