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PRECISE-IHCC Conference unveils in Singapore to explore Global Precision Medicine research and applications

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Precision Health Research, Singapore (PRECISE) and International Health Cohorts Consortium (IHCC) collaborated to exchange views on large-scale genomics and population-based programmes to advance the global precision medicine sector



Photo caption: Guest of Honour, Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health, with delegates and thought leaders from across the globe at the launch of PRECISE-IHCC Conference

Precision Health Research, Singapore (PRECISE), in collaboration with the International Health Cohorts Consortium (IHCC), launched the PRECISE-IHCC Conference, themed “From Cohorts to Clinics: The New Landscape of Global Healthcare” on from 21 to 23 August 2024.

The event was graced by Guest of Honour (GOH) Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Digital Development and Information, and Ministry of Health.

With over 50 speakers from Singapore and abroad, the conference was the first of its kind in Southeast Asia, presenting a unique platform to showcase the latest advancements in precision medicine. This conference co-organised by the International Health Cohorts Consortium, IHCC and Precision Health Research, Singapore, or PRECISE was centered around large-scale genomics and population-based programmes.

Professor Patrick Tan, Executive Director, PRECISE, said “The PRECISE-IHCC Conference is a testament to our collective dedication to transform healthcare through precision medicine. By harnessing the power of genomic data, we are paving the way for ground-breaking advancements in patient care. This conference is a wonderful platform for Singapore to showcase and leverage our unique Asian heritage to better understand precision medicine advances and share these insights from Singapore to Asia, and to the world.”

Precision Health Research, Singapore (PRECISE) is the central entity set up to coordinate a whole Singapore effort to implement Phase II of Singapore’s three-phase National Precision Medicine (NPM) programme. The IHCC’s vision is to link global cohorts to foster global collaboration and the IHCC is playing a crucial role in connecting diverse health data sources to drive global insights and innovation in precision medicine.

Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Digital Development and Information and Ministry of Health said, “PRECISE and IHCC are leveraging each other’s collective expertise and diverse perspectives to converge leading experts and stakeholders from around the world, so that we may come to explore opportunities and challenges in translating advances in precision medicine to reshape the landscape of modern healthcare”.

“With these collaborative efforts, our National Precision Medicine Programme has achieved significant milestones. These range from establishing the PRECISE-SG100K population cohort, which is revealing new and important knowledge regarding genetic and lifestyle contributors in disease risks among Singapore’s ethnic groups” added Minister DrPuthucheary. ,

PRECISE-SG100K genome dataset insights for Singapore precision medicine

The event also recognized local researchers for their project proposals that leveraged the first release dataset, that was generated from fully consented cohorts, to advance scientific knowledge and enable clinical translation. This development stemmed from an “Open Call for Proposal” (CFP) in November 2023, where scientists and physicians were invited to submit their proposals to utilise the PRECISE-SG100K data resource and to translate these research findings into precision health care approaches. A total of 36 projects were selected.

Eight Flagship Projects were selected based on their alignment with Singapore’s National Precision Medicine (NPM) programme and their potential for impactful discoveries. To advance precision medicine in Singapore, these projects will be crucial in showcasing key research outcomes and working closely with the PRECISE Scientific Committee and Data Science Team.

Additionally, 28 Driver Projects were selected for their scientific value and well-articulated project plans. These projects will deep dive into a diverse range of topics from chronic liver disease to in-depth studies into the intricacies of how genetic variants or associations can affect disease susceptibility, drug responses, metabolism, behavioral traits and more.

During the conference, leaders from prominent cohort study programs from around the world met, creating an intellectual nexus between Asia and the rest of the world. The gathering covered Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwan cohort study programmes, emphasizing its importance in bringing global expertise into Asia. The forum provided an excellent opportunity for global experts to discuss opportunities for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and business opportunities forging new pathways towards advancing precision medicine. The conference forum spotlighted precision science into patient care and highlighted global advances in genomic medicine. Some of the highlights were the role of biobanks in precision medicine, cancer genetics advances, ethics and policy in genomics research, and strategies for resolving complex genetic traits.

Additional focal points include genomic diversity, genomic science in cohort studies, genomic screening, pharmacogenomics, and population health. A special focus was placed on research in rare diseases, efforts in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), and opportunities for early career scientists to present their work and engage with leading professionals.

Dr Michèle Ramsay, Co-chair, IHCC, said “IHCC partnership with PRECISE aims to bring together an international community of population cohorts with the unified purpose of promoting precision health for all. With 89 member cohorts in 42 countries, including over 34 million participants collectively, IHCC will provide global perspectives and opportunities to study the comparative utility of clinical interventions for underrepresented and underserved communities worldwide”

Onsite Coverage by Hithaishi Bhaskar