

Singapore scientists, clinicians collaborate on 8 projects

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Singapore: Singapore has announced 8 biomedical sciences research programmes to advance understanding and treatment of diseases especially prevalent amongst the Asian population. These programmes will see biomedical scientists and clinicians working collaboratively to bring about greater healthcare benefits to society and create economic growth for Singapore. These programmes were endorsed by the Biomedical Sciences International Advisory Council chaired by Sir Richard Sykes.

Said Mr Lim Chuan Poh, Co-Chair of the Biomedical Sciences Executive Committee (BMS EXCO) and Chairman of A*STAR, "The collaborations will see a convergence of talent, capabilities and resources of the basic science and clinical communities. This augurs well for Singapore as a research hub, as our distinctive value proposition depends on our ability to coordinate and integrate our research efforts along the innovation value chain, as well as across multiple research organizations."

Four programmes supported under the A*STAR Biomedical Research Council's Strategic Positioning Fund, totalling about \$58 million over 3 years, were endorsed by the BMS IAC. One of the programmes is POLARIS, which represents a concerted effort by Singapore to venture into stratified medicine. POLARIS aims to administer the right therapies to the right patient at the right time. Led by Professor Patrick Tan from the Genome Institute of Singapore, the programme will leverage on A*STAR's scientific capabilities to identify new biomarkers and technologies that can predict how well patients will respond to medical treatment, as well as how their disease will progress.

Said Professor Soo Khee Chee, Deputy Group CEO (Education & Research), SingHealth, and Director, National Cancer Centre Singapore: "The POLARIS initiative will help clinicians determine the right diagnosis and treatment for the right patient. One of the projects we're embarking on with POLARIS is to identify new biomarkers for lung cancer that are specific to our Asian population. Lung cancer is among the top three cancers here and is often difficult to treat. These biomarkers will enable clinicians to better understand patients' disease and tailor an individual treatment strategy. In addition, with this new knowledge, we can drive the development of drugs that have greater benefits for our patients."