

Singapore-based research network appointed WHO collaborating centre for clinical trials

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A Singapore-based regional research network has been appointed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to advance high-quality clinical research to help the region deal with current and future public health challenges.

Advancing Clinical Evidence In Infectious Diseases (ADVANCE-ID) is now among WHO's collaborating centres around the world, tasked to carry out activities in direct support of the UN agency's global health programmes and strategic priorities.

As Singapore's 13th WHO collaborating centre, ADVANCE-ID will work to improve the research eco-

systems in the region, as well as partner with other countries to better prevent, detect and control infectious diseases.

The aim is to raise research standards and generate better scientific evidence more quickly.

With stronger disease control and lower infection rates in the neighbouring countries, Singapore's population can also be better protected against emerging health threats from across borders.

On Aug 31, Mo Yin, director of ADVANCE-ID, said at the ceremony officially announcing the WHO appointment: "By working together, our partners gain access to Singapore's clinical trial expertise, while Singapore benefits from the scale, diversity, experience and expertise of our regional partners.

"Together, we can answer impor-

tant questions that no single country could answer alone, and generate evidence that is more relevant and applicable across the region."

ADVANCE-ID is a regional clinical trial network housed under the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. It is currently the only such network internationally with a focus on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The other WHO collaborating centres in Singapore include one for social prescribing – the first of its kind globally – in partnership with SingHealth Community Hospitals. There is also one on food contamination monitoring and risk assessment, which has been established since 1992 and is currently under the Singapore Food Agency.

WIN-WIN PARTNERSHIP

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MO YIN, director of regional research network ADVANCE-ID.

Although ADVANCE-ID's focus is on AMR, its work as a WHO collaborating centre will not be limited to that.

"The capabilities we are building, such as trial design and implementation, research networks, capacity building, data systems and rapid activation of sites, are applicable much more broadly.

"Over time, we hope the collaborating centre can apply these capabilities to other infectious disease priorities and emerging health threats, in support of WHO and countries in the region," said Mo, who is also an infectious diseases senior consultant at the National University Hospital.

According to the WHO website, ADVANCE-ID is the first collaborating centre in the agency's Western Pacific region focusing on clinical trials. It was officially designated on April 28, for a four-year period till April 27, 2030.

A unit at the Aga Khan University in Pakistan is currently the other WHO collaborating centre focusing on clinical trials.

ADVANCE-ID was launched in

March 2022 as a network of more than 30 hospitals across Asia collaborating in infectious diseases clinical research.

As a large number of AMR deaths have occurred in Asia, the network was strategically headquartered in Singapore to conduct clinical trials for new antibiotics or preventive strategies in the region.

It now works with all three medical schools here, as well as investigators and institutions across all three public healthcare clusters. It is also supported by the National Centre for Infectious Diseases and the Communicable Diseases Agency.

The WHO appointment is recognition that ADVANCE-ID has been doing something beneficial for the whole region and even globally, said Mo.

"For clinical trials and scientific evidence to be able to influence policy, we need to engage with policymakers in governments... It now gives us more avenue to reach out to governments."

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