Singapore, 25 June 2014

NTU and TTSH to prepare healthcare workers for the next infectious disease outbreak

To ensure Singapore’s readiness in managing the next infectious disease outbreak, Nanyang Technological University’s (NTU) Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital’s (TTSH) Institute of Infectious Diseases & Epidemiology (IIDE) have joined forces to train healthcare professionals.

The new week-long course will equip health workers with the necessary skills to prepare, manage and contain an outbreak. They will also conduct practical sessions, working in groups to practice outbreak investigation and management methods.

This first joint course by NTU and TTSH is timely when the world is seeing new variants of influenza outbreaks. TTSH, as the designated national disease outbreak centre, was the screening and treatment centre for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak a decade ago.

Drawing on their SARS experience, experts from TTSH have designed the training together with international experts in travel health and emerging infectious diseases from LKCMedicine, Singapore’s newest medical school set up jointly by NTU and Imperial College London.

Professor Leo Yee Sin, Director, Institute of Infectious Diseases & Epidemiology, TTSH, who is co-director of the course, said: “After SARS, emerging novel pathogens such as the MERSCoV and Avian Influenza H7N9 have again posed significant threats to public health and clinch the attention of the world.”

“No forgetting the creeping resistant mutation of existing micro-organisms that threaten healthcare systems worldwide. It will be timely to build the capacity of healthcare workers in the midst of intense pressure from emerging novel or resistant pathogens,” said Prof Leo Yee Sin, who has been the helm in combatting the nation against various infectious diseases.
LKCMedicine’s Professor Annelies Wilder-Smith, the co-director of the course, said that another disease outbreak is inevitable. Already, the nation is witnessing a small outbreak of dengue – a mosquito-borne virus which causes fever and may be fatal in serious cases. Earlier this week, a "mega cluster" of dengue hotspots was identified in Hougang and Serangoon, where over 600 cases have been reported.

“It could be MERS-CoV, dengue or a well-known but now drug resistant organism. We don’t know for sure, but whatever the disease, the outbreak doesn’t have to be as devastating as SARS was if we are all well prepared. That’s what this course aims to offer,” said Prof Wilder-Smith, a renowned expert on infectious diseases.

Some 30 healthcare and public health policy professionals from major public and private healthcare institutions in Singapore are attending the five-day course, which runs from 23 – 27 June 2014. The participants will be building their skills in outbreak investigation and deepen their knowledge of current investigatory methods and tools for outbreak detection, investigation and response.

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About Nanyang Technological University

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has 33,500 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the colleges of Engineering, Business, Science, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and its Interdisciplinary Graduate School. It has a new medical school, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, set up jointly with Imperial College London.
NTU is also home to world-class autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre on Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI), Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N) and the Institute on Asian Consumer Insight (ACI).

A fast-growing university with an international outlook, NTU is putting its global stamp on Five Peaks of Excellence: Sustainable Earth, Future Healthcare, New Media, New Silk Road, and Innovation Asia.

Besides the main Yunnan Garden campus, NTU also has a satellite campus in Singapore’s science and tech hub, one-north, and a third campus in Novena, Singapore’s medical district.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg

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**About Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)**

TTSH is one of Singapore’s largest multi-disciplinary hospitals with 170 years of pioneering medical care and development. The hospital has 40 clinical, allied health and pharmacy departments as well as 16 specialist centres. It also has three institutes that are spearheading care, research and innovations in geriatric medicine, infectious diseases and ophthalmology. Powered by more than 7,000 healthcare staff. TTSH sees over 2,000 patients at its specialist clinics and some 460 patients at its emergency department every day. TTSH is part of the National Healthcare Group, providing holistic and integrated patient care.

With a strong quality culture steeped in patient safety, TTSH constantly challenges itself to provide faster, better, cheaper and safer care for patients. To achieve this, the hospital keeps abreast and believes in investing in its staff, facilities, medical technology and system improvements. In recognition of its commitment to excellent patient care and its comprehensive range of quality healthcare services, TTSH has been awarded the ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 certification as well as the prestigious Joint Commission International (JCI) accreditation.

For more information, please visit www.ttsh.com.sg.

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**About Institute of Infectious Diseases and Epidemiology (IIDE)**

The National Healthcare Group (NHG) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) set up the Institute of Infectious Disease and Epidemiology (IIDE) to provide an overarching platform to build human capital and expertise in the management of infectious
diseases. IIDE’s mission is to treat and prevent infectious diseases, manage outbreaks and provide strong leadership in clinical care, medical education, research, public health and community involvement through excellence and compassion in the management of patients. It integrates TTSH’s key functional units for Infectious Disease, Clinical Epidemiology, and the Communicable Disease Centre and at the same time, aims to advance these speciality fields through research, training & education and community engagement.