



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE
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SingHealth and National Healthcare Group establish mutual recognition of research ethics review boards in public healthcare sector

- *This move will save time for clinicians, scientists and researchers carrying out multi-centre research studies*

Singapore, 22 May 2014 – Public healthcare clusters SingHealth and the National Healthcare Group (NHG) have established a mutual recognition of their institutional review boards (IRBs), which look after research involving human subjects in the public healthcare sector. The two clusters signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) today to mutually recognise both of their ethics reviews.

This is a milestone for medical research in Singapore, where clinicians, scientists and researchers doing multi-centre studies in public hospitals or institutions no longer have to undergo multiple ethics reviews with different ethics review boards. The mutual recognition of the two IRBs potentially saves time, effort and costs, ultimately benefitting research that leads to better patient care.

Mrs Tan Ching Yee, Permanent Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health, affirmed the move. She said, “A harmonised ethics review system will increase efficiency for everyone engaged in medical research. This is important to enhance the translation of research outcomes from bench to bedside, to benefit our patients and citizens.”

Mutual recognition of the CIRB and DSRB

In Singapore, any research study involving human subjects has to obtain the approval of an independent ethics committee before being carried out. This is to ensure the protection of the rights, safety and well-being of research volunteers. In the public healthcare sector, hospitals and institutions utilise either the Centralised



Institutional Review Board (CIRB) under SingHealth or the Domain Specific Review Board (DSRB) under NHG for research ethics reviews.

Since their inception, the two review boards have operated independently, each providing strict ethical review and oversight for research in the institutions governed by them. Multi-centre studies involving institutions governed by the two review boards required ethics approvals from both CIRB and DSRB.

But things are set to change with the mutual recognition of research ethics reviews by CIRB and DSRB. A research study approved at one site governed by SingHealth's CIRB will now also be recognised at another governed site by NHG's DSRB, and vice versa, without requiring an additional ethics approval by the other review board. This will cut duplication efforts and improve efficiency.

“This mutual recognition of ethics review reduces the time and effort taken to initiate multi-centre studies, better facilitating medical research,” said Dr Aw Swee Eng, Chairman of SingHealth's Centralised Institutional Review Board. “More importantly, it promotes research collaborations across institutions, and such collaborations are important to advance medicine through research.”

“The coming together of the two major IRBs in the public healthcare sector to mutually recognise each other's reviews and approvals is a necessary change to encourage and facilitate collaborative research between institutions. This will minimise unnecessary duplication, thereby improving the efficiency of the ethics review process, and overall benefitting the research community.” said Associate Professor Chin Jing Jih, Chairman of NHG's Research Ethics Committee.



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About Singapore Health Services (SingHealth)

SingHealth, Singapore's largest Academic Healthcare Cluster, is committed to providing affordable and accessible quality healthcare to patients. With a total of 42 clinical specialties, its network of 2 Hospitals, 5 National Specialty Centres, 9 Polyclinics and a Community Hospital delivers a comprehensive range of multi-disciplinary and integrated medical care. SingHealth is responsible for developing Sengkang Health, a new healthcare system to deliver patient-centric care to the community in the north-east of Singapore. By 2018, a general hospital and a community hospital will be fully operational in Sengkang. The collective strengths of SingHealth and Duke-NUS, its partner in research and medical education, pave the way for the transformation of healthcare. For more information please visit: www.singhealth.com.sg.

Members of the SingHealth group:

Hospitals (Tertiary Specialty Care):

Singapore General Hospital and KK Women's and Children's Hospital

National Specialty Centres (Tertiary Specialty Care):

National Cancer Centre Singapore, National Dental Centre of Singapore, National Heart Centre Singapore, National Neuroscience Institute, and Singapore National Eye Centre

SingHealth Polyclinics (Primary Care):

Bedok, Bukit Merah, Geylang, Marine Parade, Outram, Pasir Ris, Queenstown, Sengkang, and Tampines

Community Hospital (Intermediate and Long-term Care):

Bright Vision Hospital



About National Healthcare Group (NHG)

The National Healthcare Group (NHG) is a leader in public healthcare in Singapore, recognised at home and abroad for the quality of its medical expertise and facilities. Care is provided through an integrated network of nine primary healthcare polyclinics, acute care hospital, national specialty centres, and business divisions. Together they bring a rich legacy of medical expertise to our philosophy of patient-centric care.

NHG's vision of "*Adding years of healthy life*" is more than just about healing the sick. It encompasses the more difficult but infinitely more rewarding task of preventing illness and preserving health and quality of life. With some 12,000 staff, NHG aims to provide care that is patient-centric, accessible, seamless, comprehensive, appropriate and cost-effective.

As the Regional Health System (RHS) for Central Singapore, it is vital for NHG to partner and collaborate with other stakeholders, community advisors, volunteer welfare organisations and others in this Care Network together with our patients, their families and caregivers to deliver integrated healthcare services and programmes that help in *Adding Years of Healthy Life* to all concerned.

More information is available at: <http://www.nhg.com.sg>