

National Centre for Infectious Diseases

- In FY2021, the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) continued to focus its efforts on battling COVID-19, including tackling new waves of infections caused by the Delta and Omicron variants. Besides NCID's contributions to Singapore's COVID-19 response, it also worked at keeping the population safe from other infectious diseases.

PROVIDING PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TO COVID-19 PATIENTS

Providing quality patient care requires a collective effort by the multidisciplinary team at NCID. Its Medical Social Workers (MSWs) have been counselling and supporting patients with psychological, social, and practical needs stemming from their medical conditions, or who were in isolation and had to stay away from their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. MSWs served as the 'bridge' between patients and their families and facilitated video calls. MSWs also acceded to the requests of family members, such as holding the hands of their loved ones in their final moments so that they would not feel alone.

During the Delta and Omicron waves, NCID provided care to many elderly patients. The MSWs supported their family members with care and discharge planning by linking them up with community resources for financial assistance.

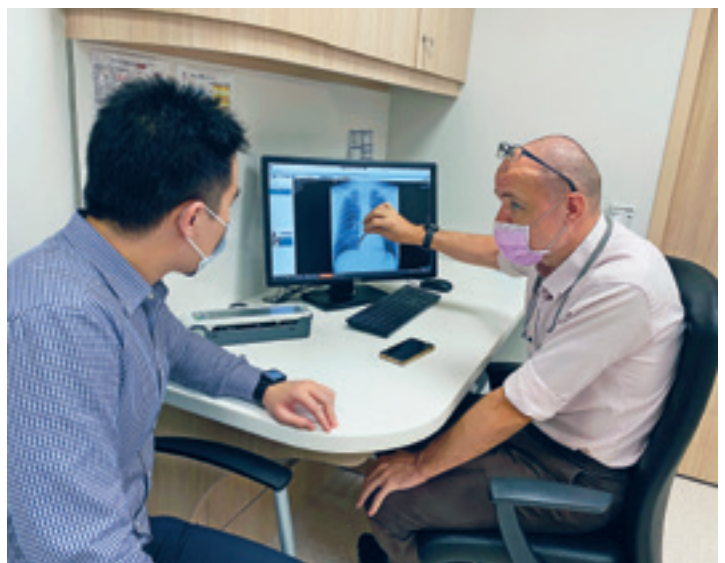


TOP RIGHT A Medical Social Worker attending to a COVID-19 patient in an isolation room at NCID.

RIGHT An Infectious Disease doctor going through the chest X-Ray results with a patient during a consultation session.

LONG COVID CLINIC AT NCID

In November 2021, NCID set up the Long COVID Clinic as a hub for patients in Singapore suffering from the complex condition. The clinic accepts patient referrals from General Practitioners (GPs), polyclinics, and other public or





Today, as Singapore embraces the ‘new normal’ of living with COVID-19, NCID stands ready to be Strong, Trusted, and United in responding effectively to support Singapore’s strategies to reopen its economy further, and stay resilient.”

PROFESSOR LEO YEE SIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES

private hospitals who have had persistent symptoms for four to eight weeks or longer since their acute infection. Its work aims to exclude other causes of the persistent symptoms as well as provide symptom relief. The clinic also conducts further assessments to determine if a subsequent referral to rehabilitation specialists for a graded exercise programme is required. Doctors will discuss with patients their fears and expectations, and provide reassurance and guidance to help pace their recovery.

The number of patients referred to the clinic increased rapidly in the first quarter of 2022 as a result of the large number of infections during the Omicron wave. With multidisciplinary support from Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), the infectious disease (ID) consultant-led clinic increased the frequency of its service from fortnightly to weekly and is involved in several Long COVID research projects.

SURVEILLANCE OF AMR AND RISK ASSESSMENT

To better support the health needs of residents across Singapore, the Antimicrobial Resistance



ABOVE Attendees of a TB awareness talk at the AWWA Active Ageing Centre.

LEFT A/Prof Jeffery Cutter, Director, National TB Programme, and the host/moderator from SWCO, Ms Nabilah.



Coordinating Office (AMRCO) in NCID piloted the Primary Care Antimicrobial Utilisation (AMU) initiative. AMU is a partnership with GPs to facilitate clinic-level monitoring of trending antibiotic usage, as well as baseline data-gathering for the assessment of future interventions.

AMU data from 29 sentinel GP clinics for the period of 2018 to 2019 were collated and analysed in FY2021. The findings indicated that the utilisation of first or second-choice antibiotics (Access antibiotics) for empirical treatment met the World Health Organization (WHO)’s recommendation of at least 60 per cent in 2019. This initiative highlighted GPs’ contributions to national efforts in controlling antimicrobial resistance through the longitudinal monitoring of prescribing practices.

This surveillance initiative will continue in FY2022 to include more GPs. It is supported by the National GP Advisory Panel (NGPAP) and the Primary Care Network (PCN) Council.

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

The tuberculosis (TB) incidence rate in Singapore has remained at a lower-moderate level over the past few years. To effectively manage the disease through preventive care, the National TB Programme in NCID engaged the community and public through two TB awareness talks held in conjunction with World TB Day 2022.

Conducted in collaboration with Sembawang West Constituency Office (SWCO) and AWWA, both talks educated the public on the symptoms of Active TB disease, and debunked common misconceptions surrounding TB. They also shed light on current treatment and management of both Latent TB infection and Active TB disease, as well as encouraged early screening for those who have been identified as close contacts of Active TB cases.

These public education and community engagement efforts served to get the public to take proactive steps to safeguard their health, and the health of those around them.



ABOVE A Pharmacist utilising the smart shelves to dispense medicine at the outpatient clinic.

RIGHT The Smart Shelf's weight-sensing ability is able to indicate if the wrong quantity of medicine has been picked.

NCID PHARMACY SMART SHELVES

Leveraging on technology and digitisation, NCID has implemented Smart Shelves at its outpatient pharmacy as part of a pilot initiative to improve efficiency and service quality of pharmacy operations. The current medication system with an automated loose tablet-counting machine that picks and packs medication, has been augmented by the Smart Shelves which feature a 'Pick to Light' function and weight-sensing ability. LED lights on the shelf with the bin that contains the medication

light up to indicate the location of the medicine to be picked for dispensing. Concurrently, the weight-sensing ability calibrates the weight of each medication bin such that verbal commands and visual reminders will alert pharmacists if an incorrect medicine or quantity was picked from the shelves.

NCID Pharmacy will continue to evaluate this pilot project on its enhanced efficiency and accuracy of dispensing medication to deliver convenient and seamless care to patients in FY2022.





EMERGING INFECTIOUS DISEASES
WILL BE A RECURRENT CHALLENGE
AND THERE IS A NEED TO BE
PREPARED. NCID WILL CONTINUE
OUR MISSION, KEEPING PACE
WITH THE EVOLUTION OF
MICROBES. WE WILL FURTHER
STRENGTHEN OUR CONNECTIONS
AND COLLABORATIONS WITH
PARTNERS WITHIN THE REGION AND
GLOBALLY TO MAINTAIN A STATE
OF PREPAREDNESS, WHETHER FOR
TACKLING SARS-COV-2 OR
OTHER NOVEL PATHOGENS
THAT MAY EMERGE.”

PROFESSOR LEO YEE SIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES