



Associate Professor Hsu Li Yang said he and artist Sonny Liew chose the coronavirus as the topic as they felt it was important to help people understand that this virus is different from Sars, which has a higher mortality rate. PHOTOS: SONNY LIEW

Creating comic strips on virus to educate public

Graphic novelist works with NUS don to shed light on virus in an accessible way

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Singapore's award-winning graphic novelist Sonny Liew has worked with Associate Professor Hsu Li Yang, the programme leader for in-

fectious diseases at the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, to produce a series of comic strips to educate the public about the coronavirus outbreak.

In one, the characters talk about influenza and Sars. The flu spreads

more easily and infects more people, so the total number of deaths is higher but the mortality rate is lower.

Prof Hsu said they chose the topic as they felt it was important to help people understand that this coronavirus is different from Sars,

or severe acute respiratory syndrome, which has a much higher mortality rate.

For one thing, Sars did not spread much in the community. "The number of confirmed cases of this new virus is far higher than Sars in a much shorter period of time, notwithstanding the impact that the annual migration just before the Chinese New Year period might have had," said Prof Hsu.

"However, the proportion of infected people who are critically ill and who have died is also far lower than Sars.

Hence, it appears to be more infectious than Sars but less deadly."

"It is important to note that human coronaviruses are pretty infective but cause only the common

cold, while the two prior animal coronaviruses that have made the leap to humans - Sars and Mers - have generally transmitted less well and are more deadly. This coronavirus seems to fall in between the two extremes."

Mr Liew, author of *The Art Of Charlie Chan Hock Chye*, said they plan to do more comic strips on the virus.

"I hope that the comics can play a small role in bringing some clarity to some of the issues in this outbreak in an accessible manner," he said.

Last year, the two collaborated on a graphic novel titled *The Antibiotic Tales*, which explains how microbes evolve and resist the drugs used to kill them.

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