

Vernon Lee to take over as NCID head from Leo Yee Sin

Isabelle Liew

Public health specialist Vernon Lee will helm the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) from July 1, the National Healthcare Group (NHG) said on Monday.

Professor Lee, now the senior director of the Communicable Diseases Division in the Ministry of Health (MOH), will take over the role of NCID executive director from Professor Leo Yee Sin. He will concurrently hold his MOH appointment.

Prof Leo helped set up NCID and has helmed it for the past six years.

From July 1, she will be appointed senior consultant at MOH and senior adviser at NHG, where she will “lend her wealth of expertise and experience in the area of infectious disease and outbreak man-

agement”, NHG said in its statement.

NHG said Prof Leo had been instrumental in establishing NCID since July 2017, before its official opening in September 2019.

During her tenure, NCID successfully managed Singapore’s first imported case of mpox – previously known as the monkeypox virus – in May 2019, and effectively managed the mpox outbreak in June 2022.

The centre also responded swiftly to the Covid-19 pandemic, which hit months after its official opening in September 2019.

Prof Leo also led the establishment of the Covid-19 research workgroup, which conducts studies on Covid-19 transmission in Singapore.

“The workgroup’s findings have since brought about improved infection control methods, relevant

public health policies, as well as diagnostic and treatment methods that benefit patients locally and worldwide,” NHG said.

As an infectious diseases specialist, Prof Leo established the first HIV programme in 1995 to provide equitable care and support to HIV patients.

She also led teams through several outbreaks in Singapore, including Nipah in 1999, Sars in 2003, the pandemic influenza in 2009, Zika in 2016 and multiple surges of dengue.

Before her role at NCID, she was head of infectious diseases at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 2003 and director of the Institute of Infectious Diseases in 2012.

Professor Philip Choo, group chief executive officer of NHG, said: “On behalf of the NHG, I would like to extend our deepest appreciation and heartfelt grati-

tude to Prof Leo for her unwavering dedication and significant contributions to healthcare in Singapore and internationally.”

Prof Lee, an adjunct professor at the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, has extensive global health experience in pandemic preparedness and response, infectious disease epidemiology and health policy and management, NHG said.

He played an instrumental role in Singapore’s response to Covid-19, such as advising the multi-ministry task force, and designing and implementing national policies on preparedness and risk management.

He was also involved in Singapore’s response to other outbreaks, including the 2009 influenza pandemic, Zika and tuberculosis.

Congratulating Prof Lee on his appointment, Prof Choo said: “I look forward to his leadership in building upon NCID’s capabilities to strengthen the delivery of clinical care, research and education of infectious diseases, public health services in Singapore when he takes the helm.”

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