

NUS centre to collaborate with WHO on bioethics

Biomedical ethics centre will align research with global body's goals

By GRACE CHUA

HOW soon after a disaster can researchers study how to prevent the next disaster, rather than focus only on rescue efforts?

When infectious disease epidemics cross borders, how strictly should governments clamp down to prevent their spread?

A biomedical ethics centre in Singapore which studies such ethical questions has won international recognition from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The Centre for Biomedical Ethics at the Yong Loo Lin medical school of the National University of Singapore (NUS) was designated a WHO collaborating centre yesterday.

This means some of the centre's research will specifically be aligned with the global health

body's bioethics goals. These include, for example, ethical issues around cross-border infectious diseases or long-term care.

It is the first such collaborating centre in Asia, and the WHO's fifth.

The international recognition will help the centre raise more funds for research, said its director, Professor Alastair Campbell.

Yesterday, the National University Health System, which runs the medical school with NUS, also launched a dedicated programme called the Paediatrics Ethics and Advocacy Centre (Peace).

The Peace programme will study, advise doctors, and educate the public on ethical issues related to children's medical care.

Peace was born of a donation to the National University Hospi-

tal paediatrics department by the estate of banker and philanthropist Khoo Teck Puat, said its director Roy Joseph.

Associate Professor Joseph said it will study, among other things, how parents and children make decisions when children fall ill; how to include adolescents in decisions; and what to do when parents and doctors disagree.

The 10-person programme consists of seven doctors, a medical social worker, a lawyer and a nurse manager.

The launch, held yesterday at the NUS Society's Kent Ridge Guild House, marked the start of a two-day workshop on paediatric medical and research ethics attended by about 60 local and global experts.

Among the issues discussed at the workshop was a situation where the parents decline blood transfusions against doctors' advice because their religious beliefs forbid the procedure.

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S'porean prof makes 'significant' donation to LSE

By JANICE TAI

A NEW academic centre will be launched at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) this year, thanks to a "significant" donation from one of its most prominent Singaporean graduates, Professor Saw Swee Hock.

The new Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre will bring together researchers from various disciplines to tackle research specific to South-east Asia.

The plans to launch the centre were announced at the LSE Asia Forum 2014 in Kuala Lumpur today. It will be officially launched in the university's new academic year starting in September.

When contacted, Prof Saw, a demographer and statistician, declined to comment or reveal the amount he donated.

While famously media-shy, the philanthropist has already donated millions of dollars to Singaporean and foreign universities.

In 2012, the well-known academic donated about \$5.2 million to his alma mater to construct the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre in London. The building, which includes a broadcasting studio, prayer rooms and a nightclub, has since won much architectural acclaim.

Prof Saw, who is in his 80s,



An artist's impression of the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre in London, which was built with a \$5.2 million donation from Prof Saw. With his latest donation, the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre will be launched this year. PHOTO: LSE

has previously said he has fond memories of the three years he spent at LSE for his doctorate in statistics, which he received in 1963.

Currently a professorial fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, he is also an active donor back home. In 2011, he gave \$30 million to the National University of Singapore to establish the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

He has also contributed to the Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University.

The new academic centre will

be led by Malaysia-born Danny Quah, professor of economics and international development at LSE. "The rise of Asia is perhaps the singular developmental and political story of our era, attracting praise and criticism, wonder and scepticism," said Prof Quah, a leading expert on the rise of Eastern economies.

"Using LSE's distinctive interdisciplinary expertise in the social sciences, the Saw Swee Hock Southeast Asia Centre can bring a global perspective to the policy and research questions specific to the region."

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