LEADERSHIP CHANGES AT THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM

After five years at the helm, Associate Professor Benjamin Ong will be stepping down as Chief Executive of the National University Health System (NUHS) and will be appointed Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health from 1 January 2014. Taking over from him as the new Chief Executive of the NUHS is its current Deputy Chief Executive, Professor John Wong. He will relinquish his role as director of the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore upon the appointment of a successor. Associate Professor Yeoh Khay Guan will be appointed as Deputy Chief Executive, NUHS, while keeping his current position as the Dean of the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

A neurologist with research interests in neuroimmunology and neuroepidemiology as well as an enthusiastic, highly effective champion of the use of healthcare information technology for quality and process improvement in patient care, Assoc Prof Ong has held various leadership appointments in his 27-year-career at the National University Hospital (NUH). These included key posts as Chairman of the hospital’s Medical Board, as well as Chair of the Department of Medicine at the medical school and the NUH.

As the Chief Executive of Singapore’s first academic health system, he played a pivotal role in bringing the NUH, NUS medical, dental and public health schools together under a common governance framework. He worked tirelessly with the leadership team to develop the collective vision for the NUHS, and enhanced the functional and synergistic integration of the NUH and Schools into a cohesive, new academic health institution. In the process, the two national specialty centres based at the NUHS, namely the National University Heart Centre, Singapore and National University Cancer Institute, Singapore, were launched and developed rapidly and successfully.

A pivotal leader

“The five years that Ben has been Chief Executive have seen the NUHS make rapid strides in becoming an integrated organization that is distinguishing itself through excellence in key clinical, biomedical education and research areas that are vital for Singapore and the world. For instance, the focus on diseases which are important in Asian populations, coupled with the unique strengths and range of expertise in the NUHS, have positioned the organization powerfully to bring medicine from bench to bedside and from the bedside to the community, for the benefit of our patients and the wider population in Singapore and beyond,” said Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, who is Chair of the NUHS Board.
“On behalf of the NUHS Board and the entire NUHS community, I would like to express our deep appreciation and grateful thanks to Ben for his strong, steady and principled leadership of the organization. We wish him every success in his new appointment and we look forward to our continuing partnership with him in his new role at the Ministry of Health,” he added.

New chief and deputy will enable the NUHS to further steepen its trajectory of growth as an AMC

As the incoming Chief Executive of the NUHS, Professor John Wong brings valuable experience from his leadership of various institutions to the job, including his stewardship as past Chairman of the NUH Medical Board as well as Dean of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, taking the School to its current international prominence even as he helped raise oncology practice and research at the NUHS and Singapore to high international levels.

Prof Wong is an oncologist who wears multiple hats – Director of the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore, Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Health Sciences Authority and Vice Provost for Academic Medicine at the NUS. Active in helping to raise Singapore’s medical and biomedical research profile internationally, his ability to draw and create synergistic partnerships and encourage collaboration with some of the world’s most respected academic healthcare institutions and individuals is expected to create more opportunities for the NUHS.

“Under his leadership, and with Yeoh Khay Guan as his Deputy, I am confident that the NUHS will continue to forge ahead with great vision and energy as an academic medical centre (AMC) characterised by its excellence in healthcare delivery, education and research, creating distinctive value for our patients and Singapore,” said Prof Tan.

The new Deputy Chief Executive of the NUHS and current Dean of the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, Assoc Prof Yeoh Khay Guan is an internationally respected academic gastroenterologist. As the Lead Principal Investigator of the Singapore Gastric Cancer Consortium, a national flagship research group, he has helped pioneer ground-breaking research which can contribute to improved survival outcomes for gastric cancer here.

Reflecting on his tenure as NUHS chief, Assoc Prof Ong said, “Five years go by quickly when one is engaged in thoroughly absorbing and meaningful work, and I think there is nothing better and more rewarding than to be engaged with my colleagues here at the NUHS, in finding better ways to help patients and train our students for Singapore’s future. We have, working together, helped build the NUHS to the point where we are making a difference to healthcare in Singapore. With John Wong at the wheel, ably assisted by Yeoh Khay Guan, I believe the NUHS will continue to cover new ground and make the needed impact in key areas of care transformation and academic endeavour.”
Said Prof John Wong, the Isabel Chan Professor in Medical Sciences, “The NUHS has one of the largest concentrations of dedicated healthcare professionals, scientists, and administrators in the region, all working in public service to make this a better Singapore. Professors Tan Chorh Chuan and Benjamin Ong have done a remarkable job of bringing the strengths of the NUH and NUS’s Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, the Faculty of Dentistry, the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and the Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies together to develop solutions for Singapore’s healthcare problems, as well as to ensure that Singapore has even better healthcare manpower for future needs. Together with the Hospital and Schools’ leadership, as well as the rest of Singapore’s healthcare and research communities, Khay Guan and I will ensure to build on this great legacy entrusted to us.”

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About the National University Health System (NUHS)

The National University Health System (NUHS) groups the National University Hospital, the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, the NUS Faculty of Dentistry and the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health under a common governance structure to create synergies for the advancement of health by integrating clinical care, research and education.

The enhanced capabilities and capacity enable the NUHS to deliver better patient care, train future generations of doctors more effectively and bring innovative treatments to patients through groundbreaking research.

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