US expert confident of S’pore public health system

Amrita Kaur

While many people are putting off their travel plans because of the coronavirus outbreak, United States National Academy of Medicine president Victor Dzau saw no need to shelve the two-day workshop in Singapore that aims to address the challenges of ageing populations across the world.

Health Care Systems And Public Health: A Workshop For The Global Roadmap For Healthy Longevity Initiative began yesterday, with more than 200 delegates from across the world converging here and putting their minds together to come up with solutions to help the aged improve their quality of life.

The workshop is being held at the National University Health System (NUHS) campus in Kent Ridge.

Professor Dzau said of the coronavirus outbreak in Singapore: “I think the situation is contained and the public health system is so good in Singapore, noting its response to Sars 17 years ago, so there is no worry in coming to Singapore.”

Professor John Eu-Li Wong, co-chair of the Global Roadmap For Healthy Longevity Commission and senior vice-president (Health in-

ovation and translation) at National University of Singapore, said: “Though there is anxiety and apprehension among Singaporeans, I think that the Government and healthcare sector here are following the best practices. We have been approaching this prudently, so we still allow life, business and work to continue as best as possible.”

He noted that five years ago, following the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the US National Academy of Medicine convened an independent, international multi-disciplinary commission to propose a Global Health Risk Framework for the Future to prevent, prepare for and respond to infectious disease crises.

“In January 2016, the commission released a report which highlighted that managing such a crisis required a whole-of-society effort and commitment,” he added.

“One could say that the US National Academy of Medicine was prescient given what we are seeing now with a novel coronavirus,” said Prof Wong.

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PROFESSOR VICTOR DZAU, president of the United States National Academy of Medicine.

NO WORRIES
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SEE HOME B6
International commission to create road map for healthy longevity

Over 200 delegates at two-day workshop to discuss challenges caused by global ageing

Amita Kaur

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This underscores the importance of developing multi-disciplinary solutions to maximise the number of years lived in good health and a state of well-being”, said Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor yesterday.

This can help people stay healthy and connected to the community, and delay the onset of frailty, she said in her opening remarks at a conference titled “Designing Healthy Ageing”.

Participants, including an international commission appointed by NUS, comprised more than 200 delegates from countries such as Singapore, the United States, France, China and South Africa, as well as academic institutions from the biomedical sciences, healthcare organisations and governments.

Professor John Kinsl Wong, co-chair of the Global Roadmap for Healthy Longevity, said: “For the first time in history, we have more people over the age of 65 than those under five. Yet, instead of celebrating our extended lifespan, societies are becoming increasingly apprehensive about the impact of an ageing population.”

The commission will make recommendations after discussions and presentations.

Its proposals are focused on encouraging innovation and globally-recognised policies, governmental and non-governmental organisations, the private sector and stakeholders globally to address the needs of the older population.

The recommendations should also include improvements to long-term care systems, including funding frameworks, health prevention, disease prevention services and social care of ageing societies in the world.

The findings of the presentations and discussions at the workshop are expected to be published henceforth on the NUS website.

“The hope is to gain new insights into the approaches and practices that could be adopted across the entire healthcare ecosystem to benefit the seniors, as well as build a strong network of global thought leaders on ageing,” said Dr Khor.

She noted that the proportion of the world’s population aged over 60 will almost double from 12 per cent to 20 per cent between now and 2050, according to the World Health Organization.

Professor Chan, NUS president, commended Singapore on its plans in place to address the needs of its ageing population and said the country “stands out not just in the Asian region, but globally”.

“The government has focused greatly on its long-term social and economic programme for the elderly, and there are good social-security programmes for the older population, so I think Singapore is very progressive,” the professor said.

While many countries in Asia have an ageing society and are not as well prepared, Singapore has done a good job.

“The 10-Point Plan for Successful Ageing and there are good social-security programmes for the older population, so I think Singapore is very progressive,” the professor said.