

Source: The Straits Times, Page A9
Date: 13 November 2020

Expert panel to give advice on safe use of vaccines

14-member committee comprises those from infectious diseases, immunology, other fields

Timothy Goh

A 14-member committee has been appointed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to make recommendations to the Government on its Covid-19 vaccination strategy, and ensure the safe and effective use of vaccines against the coronavirus.

Yesterday, MOH said in a news statement that the committee is chaired by Associate Professor Benjamin Ong, senior adviser to the director of medical services. He is also senior vice-president of health education and resources at the National University of Singapore.

The committee comprises experts in infectious diseases, immunology and other relevant fields. Its members include Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, chief health scientist and executive director of MOH's Office for Healthcare Transformation; Dr Danny Soon, chief executive at the Consortium for Clinical Research and Innovation Singapore; and Dr Lisa Ooi, vice-president of healthcare and wellness at the Economic Development Board.

MOH said: "The expert committee will leverage scientific and clinical expertise to assess vaccine candidates, and recommend the appropriate vaccines for use against Covid-19 in Singapore when they become available."

The ministry added that the committee's role is to consider the most up-to-date information and assessment of Covid-19 vaccines, including closely monitoring the global vaccine development landscape and stance of agencies such as the World Health Organisation.

As the latest clinical data of vaccine candidates emerges, the expert committee will assess their safety, efficacy and suitability for use by the different segments of Singapore's population.

It will then make recommendations regarding the administration of vaccines to specific segments of the population and the overall vaccination strategy for Singapore.

The committee was announced on Tuesday. MOH said yesterday that its appointment came into effect on Oct 5.

It convened its first meeting on Oct 13 and has met regularly in the past month to discuss the profiles of various vaccine candidates, as well as the conditions for their deployment in Singapore's context.

for all segments of the population.

He added: "The safety of Singaporeans is our top priority, and the diverse range of expertise among my colleagues in the expert committee will put us in good stead as we deliberate on strategies for the implementation of Covid-19 vaccination in Singapore."

tingoh@sph.com.sg



A participant in a US vaccine trial receiving an injection in Baltimore, Maryland, in May. As the latest clinical data of vaccine candidates emerges, the expert panel will assess their safety, efficacy and suitability for use in Singapore. PHOTO: REUTERS



DIVERSE RANGE OF EXPERTS

The safety of Singaporeans is our top priority, and the diverse range of expertise among my colleagues in the expert committee will put us in good stead as we deliberate on strategies for the implementation of Covid-19 vaccination in Singapore.



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BENJAMIN ONG, senior adviser to the director of medical services. He is also senior vice-president of health education and resources at the National University of Singapore.