

Flu jab study wins gold at health congress



A vaccination session by Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 2015. The flu jab study, by the National Centre for Infectious Diseases and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, had 200 participants aged 65 and up. Its findings could help determine how often people here should get a flu jab. ST FILE PHOTO

Researchers found getting vaccinated twice a year may better protect elderly S'poreans

Felicia Choo

Elderly Singaporeans may be better protected against the flu and respiratory illness if they get an influenza or flu jab twice a year, instead of once, a local study has found.

Researchers found that with a second vaccination after six months, the proportion of participants with antibody levels high enough to protect against the three influenza strains in the vaccine increased from 56.8 per cent to 80.4 per cent.

The May 2016 to November 2017 study by the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) and Tan Tock Seng Hospital won gold in the Singapore Young Investigator Award (Clinical Research) category at the Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress yesterday.

The award was part of the Congress' Scientific Competition, which recognises research studies that have improved patient care and overall population health.

Dr Barnaby Young, the lead researcher and a consultant of infectious diseases at NCID, said that the findings could help to determine how often someone living in Singapore should get a flu jab.

In Singapore's tropical climate, influenza causes infections year-round with outbreak timings that are difficult to predict, whereas in temperate climates, they occur only during winter, he added.

The study involved 200 participants aged 65 and up.

At the Congress, which was organised by the National Healthcare Group (NHG), two agreements were also signed to further develop healthcare research and innovation.

NHG and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a Joint Programme for Clinician Scientist Development. It is aimed at fostering clinician scientists and funding their research.

Separately, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed to encourage polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students to take up internships for serious games, or electronic games used for purposes beyond entertainment.

The MOA was signed by NHG, NTU, the five polytechnics - Nanyang, Ngee Ann, Republic, Temasek and Singapore polytechnics - and the ITE.

The Alive-Poly-ITE Student Internship Programme will pair healthcare experts with students, who have a background in game design or storytelling, graphics design and IT, to develop serious game prototypes.

The Congress, which is being held at Max Atria at Singapore Expo and the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine Clinical Sciences Building in Novena, runs until tomorrow.

About 1,800 medical professionals are expected to attend. The discussions are focused on population health, preventive medicine, as well as primary and community care. Health Minister Gan Kim Yong attended the Congress yesterday as the guest of honour.

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80.4%

The proportion of participants in the study with antibody levels high enough to protect against the three influenza strains in the vaccine if they received a second flu shot within six months of the first - up from 56.8 per cent if they received only one shot.

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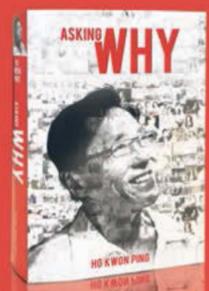


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"I was then put into a small windowless room of about 4 or 5 square metres with just a concrete bench... I led a solitary existence with no sense of day or night, or of time passing."

Mr Ho Kwon Ping, the founder-chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings, on his two-month detention under the Internal Security Act at the age of 25



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