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First MOM – TARIPH Joint Symposium off to a strong start

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On May 10, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and The Academic Respiratory Initiative for Pulmonary Health (TARIPH) held a joint Symposium on Lung Health in the Occupational Setting: Prevention, Protection and Promotion. The event was hosted at LKCmedicine's Toh Kian Chui Annex Lecture Theatre with a livestream to the Learning Studio at the Clinical Sciences Building. Jointly organised by MOM and TARIPH, this marks the first collaborative event between MOM and NTU Singapore since the launch of the NTU- Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Institute Research Centre.



The symposium hosted more than 200 attendees, comprising respiratory and occupational health physicians, nurses, workplace safety health officers, industrial hygienists, policy makers and researchers from across Singapore, who were keen to learn about occupational lung health whilst exploring networking opportunities among various stakeholders. The response was overwhelming, maxing out the capacity of the designated lecture theatre, hence several attendees had to be routed to the Learning Studio at the next building, the Clinical Sciences Building. The event aimed to raise awareness of occupational lung disease as MOM data suggests that under-reporting and notification of occupational diseases may have occurred which may be due to a physician's lack of awareness to identify difficult to diagnose occupational lung disease states.



The symposium commenced with a welcome address by LKCMedicine Dean, Prof James Best and an introduction to TARIPH by Assoc Prof Fabian Lim, its co-academic lead. Prof Best highlighted LKCMedicine's commitment to promote better ways to prevent, diagnose and treat occupational lung disease in Singapore, and emphasised TARIPH's commitment to connect experts in the occupational health and lung disease field with government agencies, so as to benefit the health and healthcare of workers in Singapore. He hoped that the symposium would facilitate further collaboration to safeguard the respiratory health of Singaporeans in the workplace.



This was followed by the keynote address by Mr Ismadi Mohd, Deputy Commissioner for Workplace Safety and Health Director, Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Specialist Department and OSH Division, MOM. Mr Ismadi spoke about the progress of Workplace Health in Singapore and the importance of reframing, renewing and refocusing efforts in Workplace Health especially in light of the WSH 2028 vision.



After the introductory presentations, the symposium proceeded with a session focused on Occupational Exposures chaired by A/Prof Loo Chian Min, Senior Consultant and former head of the Department of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine at the Singapore General Hospital. During this session, speakers from various public and educational institutes such as DSO National Laboratories, National Environmental Agency, MOM and NTU Singapore talked about the effects on the use of tear gas during mask confidence training, threats of pollutants within the air and occupational hazards, which include exposures of nanomaterials from printing equipment. The second session focused on specific occupational lung diseases. In this session chaired by Tan Tock Seng's Dr Lee Lay Tin, head of Occupational Health Department, experts from Changi General Hospital, Singapore General Hospital, National University of Singapore and MOM discussed how best to identify symptoms and underlying causes of COPD, lung cancer and other occupational respiratory disease states. Given the good response at the symposium, plans are in the pipeline for future collaborations between TARIPH and MOM.



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