

NTU's medical school gets new dean

By KEZIA TOH

SINGAPORE'S newest medical school has a new dean.

Irish academic Dermot Kelleher will take up the appointment at Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine on Aug 1.

The immunology and infectious diseases expert takes the reins from founding dean Stephen Smith who will focus on his role as NTU's vice-president of research.

The NTU medical school was set up in partnership with Imperial College London, which has one of the world's top medical schools. The school's first batch of 50 undergraduates will begin classes next year.

Professor Kelleher, 56, will also be principal of Imperial's medical faculty.

Having spent the past 23 years at Trinity College Dublin, where he was head of its medical school and vice-provost for medical affairs in 2006, his vision is to nurture a new breed of scientist-doctors who understand the science of diseases as they evolve, he said.

Prof Kelleher told The Straits Times: "I think it is critically important that our students and graduates appreciate the importance of a scientific basis of disease."

He said diseases such as cancer can evolve with changes in how genes interact with the environment, for example.

"If you fast forward 10 years, your practices and solutions are going to have to understand all that in order to practise the developments in new technologies," Prof



Prof Kelleher will take the reins from Prof Stephen Smith, founding-dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

Kelleher said.

The professor is author of more than 200 scientific and medical publications, and holds the rights to 14 patents in related industries.

NTU president Bertil Andersson said Prof Kelleher's experience in translating medical research to new diagnostics and treatments for patients would complement NTU's strong record in biomedical engineering.

As dean, Prof Kelleher, who is married with two children, will direct the school's education and research activities. He will divide his time between NTU and Imperial, aligning education and research activities at both schools.

Meanwhile, preparations to recruit the first cohort of medical students at NTU and to finalise the curriculum are under way.

The school has plans to equip each student with tablet computers, with access to online content and apps as learning aids.

One learning tool that is ready for use is an app that contains information on the human anatomy.

Prof Kelleher said such new approaches to learning set the NTU medical course apart: "Medicine is a discipline which benefits from diverse approaches to education."

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