



Artist's impression of NTU's Experimental Medicine Building, which will be completed in 2015 and will be located near the School of Biological Sciences to facilitate collaboration between researchers. SOURCE: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

## RENOWNED SCIENTISTS TO BE INVOLVED IN PROJECT

# NTU's medical school to tackle Singapore's key health challenges

*It unveils research strategy in four areas that are relevant to nation's ageing population*

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**SINGAPORE** – The Republic's newest medical school, Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, yesterday unveiled its research strategy, which will be aimed at tackling Singapore's key health challenges in order to serve its population's future needs.

The research will be led by top scientific minds and cover four areas that are relevant to the nation's ageing population and modern lifestyle: Metabolic diseases, infectious diseases, neuroscience and mental health, as well as dermatology and skin biology. The work will be supported by cross-cutting technology platforms in fields such as developmental biology, structural biology and research on health services outcomes.

Jointly set up by NTU and Imperial College London, the school welcomed its first intake of 54 students last August. Its main task is training doctors, but medical research goes hand in hand with education as the biomedical field is developing quickly, said NTU President Bertil Andersson.

"It would be very hard to have a medical school without any research and students will really be hampered by not having learnt the newest things," said Prof Andersson.

The line-up of illustrious scientists who will be conducting the research includes Professor Philip Ingham, a

renowned expert in the field of developmental genetics who will serve as Vice-Dean of Research at the school.

The next eight to 12 months will be spent ramping up recruitment, said Professor Ingham, in response to a question about the research timeline. Staff grants for skin research have been distributed and a call for proposals has been announced, said NTU Provost Freddy Boey.

Professor Balazs Gulyas, a clinician scientist whose work focuses on translational neuroscience, is conducting neuroscience and mental-health research at the school.

"(Singapore has) an ageing population. Consequently, there are more and more older people with mental diseases," said Prof Gulyas, who added that challenges such as traffic accidents causing brain traumas and higher incidences of suicide should be tackled through the research.

Skin biology expert Professor David Becker, also on the research team, said those who are ageing and diabetics tend to have problems with wound healing. "There are many amputations every week on lower limbs from wounds that do not heal and, hence, we want to learn a lot more about this to improve the situation," he said.

Regarding the coming intake for the school, NTU said at least 66 students would be admitted for the next academic year.

By 2015, the school will have two new buildings: The Clinical Sciences Building near Tan Tock Seng Hospital and Experimental Medicine Building near the NTU School of Biological Sciences. According to NTU estimates, they will cost about S\$250 million, including manpower and research.