

Hong Kong Sars hero to join NTU as Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine's new dean

By [WONG PELTING](#)



NTU/Facebook

Professor Joseph Sung, 60, an eminent gastroenterologist who served as the president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, will be appointed dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine following a global search.

Published 12 AUGUST, 2020 UPDATED 12 AUGUST, 2020

343 Shares



- Professor Joseph Sung, an eminent gastroenterologist, will be given the highest faculty rank at NTU
- He succeeds Professor James Best, who is retiring after nearly seven years as dean of the medical school
- Besides being dean, Prof Sung will be NTU's senior vice-president for health and life sciences

SINGAPORE — A leading medical authority whom Time magazine hailed as an “Asian hero” for his contributions during the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) epidemic will join Nanyang Technological University (NTU) as the new dean of the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

NTU announced on Tuesday (Aug 11) that Professor Joseph Sung, 60, an eminent gastroenterologist who served as the president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, was found following a global search for a new dean to succeed Professor James Best, who is retiring after nearly seven years at the helm of the medical school.

This professorship, which was established in 2017, is only bestowed on faculty members with extraordinary scholarly achievements that typically span multiple disciplinary boundaries. Right now, only five faculty members hold the rank and none of them are from the medical school.

Besides being dean, Prof Sung will take on the role of senior vice-president for health and life sciences at the university, a new leadership position at NTU.

NTU president Subra Suresh said this new position “mirrors the practice of dual appointments in many universities in North America and the United Kingdom, where the medical school dean also serves the broader university community in direct reporting line to the head of the institution”.

In this role, Prof Sung will lead an effort to integrate university-wide activities in health, medicine and life sciences spanning the full spectrum of education, research, innovation and clinical practice to forge multidisciplinary interactions among schools and colleges within NTU.

He will also work to foster collaborations with the medical and healthcare enterprise in Singapore and around the globe.

In his email sent to alumni members announcing Prof Sung’s appointments, Prof Suresh added that Prof Sung was “unanimously recommended” by the medical school’s search advisory committee. His appointment was also endorsed by the university’s academic affairs committee and members of the NTU Board of Trustees, he said.

He also chaired the Worldwide Universities Network, a global higher education network of 23 research-intensive universities committed to dealing with urgent challenges, from 2016 to 2018.

Read also: [Singapore scientists say you can cancel the noise but keep your window open](#)

He has “extensive experience as a global leader and administrator”, Prof Suresh said.

In 2003, Prof Sung was chairman of the department of medicine and therapeutics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Prince of Wales Hospital when Sars struck.

A gastroenterologist by training, he had to orchestrate the hospital's response to a virus that seemed to be spreading unchecked through the city, the medical journal Lancet said.

Read also: [New studies by local researchers explore social impact of Covid-19 outbreak in Singapore](#)

When the outbreak receded, Prof Sung was feted as an Asian hero by Time magazine for his work.

From 2010 to 2017, he was the vice-chancellor and president of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, which has consistently been regarded as part of the top three higher learning institutions in the territory.

There, he has been the Mok Hing Yiu professor of medicine at the department of medicine and therapeutics since 2007. Before the vice-chancellorship, he had also served as the associate dean of its faculty of medicine and head of its Shaw College.

Prof Sung also leads two research entities at the university. They are the Institute of Digestive Disease and the Stanley Ho Big Data Decision Analytics Research Centre.

He is an expert in gastroenterology, a field of medicine focused on the digestive system and its disorders. He received substantial grants for his varied research work ranging from the prevention and early diagnosis of gastroenterological cancers to Sars and infectious diseases.