NUS hosts international conference on social impact of economic stress in Asia-Pacific region
NUS leads discussions on Singapore’s social policies

NUS’ Centre for Social Development Asia (CSDA), in collaboration with the Centre for Social Development (CSD) at the Washington University in St Louis, organised a seminar on 7 to 8 June 2010, which brought together 60 professionals, including many NUS and overseas academics as well as policymakers, to discuss Singapore’s social policies. The discussions were focused on the history, development, assessment and outlook of Singapore’s policies pertaining to health, housing, social security and community development.

Singapore’s Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Dr Vivian Balakrishnan was the Guest-of-Honour. In his opening address, he highlighted key lessons learnt in the architecture of Singapore’s social policies, namely, “that we have to be self-reliant; we have to look after our families; we have to build assets; and we need to be fair.” He also identified some challenges that would have significant impact on the development of Singapore’s social policy: economic volatility, an ageing population and low birth rates, the family as an institution under stress, and Singapore as an increasingly cosmopolitan city.

The seminar was chaired by Dr S Vasoo, Chairman of the Advisory Council of the CSDA and Associate Professorial Fellow at the NUS Department of Social Work; and Prof Michael Sherraden, Benjamin Youngdahl Professor of Social Development and CSD Director. Prof Sherraden, who had been named among the world’s top 100 most influential people in 2010 by TIME Magazine under the “Thinkers” category, is well-known for his pioneering work on asset building for low-income earners.

Launched in 2007, CSDA’s mission is to conduct applied social research and build knowledge to help the development of social policies and programmes, with a focus on Asia.

Inaugural dialogue session on caregiving for the elderly

Best practices on conducting research, designing policy and implementing social programmes for caregivers of the elderly in Singapore were discussed at the first in a series of dialogue sessions addressing ageing issues. The session was organised by the Tsao Foundation Ageing Research Initiative, a joint collaboration between the Foundation and the NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS); and Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School’s Programme in Health Services and Systems Research.

Director of the Research Initiative Assoc Prof Angelique Chan from the NUS Department of Sociology, FASS, shared the preliminary results of an ongoing nationwide survey, the first such study on caregiving for the elderly, commissioned by Singapore’s Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports. Three international experts – Prof Steven Zarit from Pennsylvania State University, Prof Alfred Chan from Lingnan University and Prof Harvey Cohen from Duke University – also presented their views on caregiving issues from social science, clinical and policy perspectives.

The Tsao Foundation Ageing Research Initiative seeks to advance research on ageing issues through high impact projects as well as platforms which promote exchange and collaboration between researchers, policymakers and care providers.
NUS hosts international conference on social impact of economic stress in Asia-Pacific region

Some 200 eminent policymakers, practitioners and researchers from 18 countries attended an international conference held at NUS from 3 to 4 June 2010 on “Economic Stress, Human Capital and Families in Asia: Research and Policy Challenges”.

Noting Asia’s rapid transformation, NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan said: “There is a pressing need, therefore, to better understand the critical issues, dynamics and challenges of a rising Asia, through deeper and more integrative research, which can also help inform policy and potential solutions. Universities, as key drivers of knowledge creation, transmission and application, can play a crucial role in this regard.”

At the conference, more than 50 professionals from 18 countries presented a total of 32 papers covering the experiences of 14 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Dr Noeleen Heyzer, who is also a distinguished alumnus of NUS, gave the keynote address. She said: “Economic stresses bring to the fore complex policy challenges but also opportunities. It is those countries that maintain an explicit and unrelenting recognition that human development rests on the integration of economic and social policies that will manage to build resilience to future crises. Working together, Asia can shape the forces of the economic recovery ... As a region we must build upon our collective strengths if we were not only to recover from the present economic crisis but make social progress that will see the region’s people live healthier, wealthier and longer lives in solidarity with each other.”

NUS and Dads for Life movement hold first international conference on fatherhood in Asia

Fatherhood in Asia was an immensely important yet insufficiently discussed topic. The first international conference on “Fatherhood in 21st Century Asia: Research, Interventions and Policies” from 17 to 18 June 2010, organised by NUS’ Asia Research Institute (ARI), in collaboration with the national “Dads for Life” movement, was hence a milestone event. Guest-of-Honour Parliamentary Secretary of the Singapore Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports Dr Vivian Balakrishnan gave the welcome address. He said: “In a context where societal and familial needs are constantly evolving, and where familial and gender roles are constantly changing, this conference is timely. The value of research and conferences like today’s, then, is to understand these trends and shifts in context and to inform our policies and programmes impacting fatherhood.” Seventeen selected papers on fatherhood were presented by the conference speakers comprising scholars, policymakers and practitioners from 10 different countries.
NUS hosts 8th ASEAN Youth Cultural Forum

Participants from member universities of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) University Network (AUN) showcased their diverse cultures and traditions through an exciting repertoire of songs and dances at the opening ceremony of the 8th ASEAN Youth Cultural Forum on 7 June 2010. The forum is held every year under the auspices of the AUN, and NUS was hosting it for the first time. Jointly organised by NUS’ International Relations Office and Centre For the Arts, the Forum aimed to enhance and strengthen mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation among ASEAN youths.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan said: “Drawing on our distinctive and complementary strengths, every AUN member university brings to the network its unique culture and heritage. The tradition of open sharing and cooperation that typifies the network enables us to learn and benefit mutually from each other’s perspectives and experience.”

On NUS’ contribution and emphasis on Asia, Prof Tan said: “Rooted in ASEAN, we have endeavoured to grow strengths in education and research of relevance to our region.”

Officially established as an autonomous organisation in 1995 by a mandate of the Minister for Higher Education in ASEAN countries, the AUN aims to strengthen cooperative relationships among universities in ASEAN by promoting collaborative study and research programmes in priority areas identified by ASEAN.

NUS Global Asia Institute drives integrative research on critical issues confronting Asia

Five new research projects addressing issues critical to Asia’s future had been awarded grants resulting from NUS Global Asia Institute’s (NUS-GAI) first grant call. Three of the five projects were presented at NUS-GAI’s inaugural workshop on 17 June 2010. Chaired by NUS Senior Advisor and Emeritus Professor of Engineering and Applied Science at Princeton University William Schowalter, the workshop aimed to foster the exchange of ideas and further collaborations between the grant recipients and other experts from diverse fields.

Research topics examined by the five awarded projects were “Tackling Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in Asia: A Multidisciplinary and Multisectoral Initiative”, “Estimating and Projecting Urbanisation and City Growth”, “Asian Cities as Centres of Global Modernity”, “Mapping the Technological and Cultural Landscape of Scientific Development in Asia”, and “Asian Cities: Liveability, Sustainability, Diversity and Spaces of Encounter”.

Speaking at the workshop, Director of NUS-GAI Prof Seetharam Kallidaikurichi said: “As NUS’ vision is to be a leading global university centred in Asia, influencing the future, NUS-GAI seeks to contribute to this vision by providing thought leadership in research and scholarship, in topics which are of direct relevance to Asia’s future.”

Established in 2009, NUS-GAI seeks to provide deep insights into issues important to Asia and the world through integrative research. Its research agenda is focused on three main themes: challenges in the global economy, future of urban societies and resource management for liveable cities.
Hebrew University of Jerusalem partners NUS to establish CREATE research centre

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the largest and oldest university in Israel, will work with NUS to develop a research programme in “Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms of Inflammation”, which aims to accelerate the development of diagnostic/prognostic indicators and novel therapeutics for common inflammatory diseases in Asia and beyond. This partnership between the two leading universities is part of the CREATE (Campus for Research Excellence And Technological Enterprise) programme of Singapore’s National Research Foundation (NRF).

This new research programme will be led by Prof Ehud Razin, Dr Marcus Rabwin Chair in Cancer Research and former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Hebrew University of Jerusalem; and Prof Mike Kemeny, Head of the Department of Microbiology at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

In addition, one of Germany’s top engineering universities, the Technical University of Munich (TUM), will also be setting up the TUM-CREATE Centre to conduct research relating to Electromobility in Megacities. TUM will have as research partners, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore, NUS.

NRF announced the establishment of the two CREATE centres on 11 June 2010. NRF Chairman Dr Tony Tan said: “These two new CREATE centres would become part of a very rich R&D landscape in Singapore. We expect the active interactions between the researchers at CREATE and their counterparts in our local scientific institutions would bring about many scientific breakthroughs as well as disruptive technologies that can start up new high-tech companies in Singapore in the future.”

The idea behind CREATE was to bring together in one location research centres of selected world-class universities and institutions in Singapore, fostering interaction between researchers of diverse backgrounds in order to encourage greater innovation. The two recently announced centres bring the total CREATE centres up to five.

Prestigious international conference on air transport, air law and regulation

NUS’ Centre for International Law (CIL), McGill University’s Institute of Air and Space Law (IASL) and the Singapore Aviation Academy (SAA) jointly organised the prestigious International Conference on Air Transport, Air Law and Regulation, held from 24 to 26 May 2010. The conference addressed critical issues facing civil aviation, with a particular emphasis on Asian air transportation. It was attended by about 150 delegates – comprising civil aviation administrations, airport authorities, air traffic service providers, transport ministries, aviation security providers and professionals – from 37 countries.

Director-General of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore Mr Yap Ong Heng opened the conference. He said in his welcome address: “This Conference provides a timely platform for us to better understand the prevailing aviation issues and their implications in the legal realm. It provides an excellent opportunity for all of us present to exchange views, seek common or global solutions, and provide lessons and guidance for states.”
Novel drug combination benefiting breast cancer patients

A team led by Senior Principal Investigator Dr Lee Soo Chin from the Cancer Science Institute of Singapore (CSI Singapore), NUS, found a novel combination of drugs that could halve therapy costs and decrease the side effects of treatment for advanced breast cancer patients. The research was published in the leading cancer journal *Annals of Oncology* on 29 April 2010, and was carried out under the Experimental Therapeutics programme at CSI Singapore.

The researchers combined the anti-fungal drug, ketoconazole, with a chemotherapy drug used in the treatment of breast cancer, docetaxel. Patients were administered a lower dose of docetaxel – only 70 milligrams as opposed to the standard dosage of 120 to 140 milligrams.

“One of the main side effects of docetaxel is that it causes white blood cells count to be very low. Low white blood cell count associated with fever is a common complication of chemotherapy and probably the most clinically significant complication,” said Dr Lee, who is also Senior Consultant at the Department of Haematology Oncology at the National University Hospital. She added: “Some 23 per cent of patients may be admitted to the hospital because of fever associated with low white blood cell count. For patients receiving a lower dose of docetaxel, only three per cent of them were admitted to the hospital.”

Besides reduced side effects, patients could also look forward to cutting down therapy cost. Dr Lee explained: “While docetaxel is a commonly used chemotherapy drug, the cost of docetaxel ranges from S$1,800 to S$2,500 per cycle. But with the new drug combination, it may cost the patient approximately S$1,200 to S$1,400, so that would mean savings of about 40 to 50 per cent.”

Faster and more targeted radiation therapy at the National University Cancer Institute

Patients at the Radiation Therapy Centre (RTC) of the National University Cancer Institute (NCIS), Singapore, can expect faster and more precise radiation treatment following RTC’s revamp of its clinical capabilities and capacity. The NCIS will be adding another Linear Accelerator (LINAC) machine – which delivers electromagnetic radiation to kill cancer cells and shrink tumours – to its existing two, and upgrading its machines to offer more advanced features.

The new LINAC machines will be enabled with Intensity Modulated Radiation Therapy (IMRT) and Image Guided Radiation Therapy (IGRT) capabilities, which allow radiation therapists to visualise the tumour at the time of treatment, thus enabling more precise treatment while minimising damage to surrounding healthy tissue.

Head of Radiation Oncology Department at NCIS Assoc Prof Jay Lu Jiade said: “Once the new facility is installed, the treatment time will be reduced by 50 per cent. In addition, the new treatment methods allow therapists to use a lower dose of radiation to treat patients, so side effects such as dry mouth and skin irritation are expected to be reduced.”

The switch to using such state-of-the-art radiotherapy equipment will take place in stages, over one year. The first new LINAC machine will be operational from August 2010.
We proudly celebrate the following recent achievements:

- **NUS’ commitment towards building a greener and more sustainable campus** was once again affirmed at this year’s Building and Construction Authority (BCA) Awards, the most coveted Singapore awards recognising excellence in local built environments. NUS received:
  - the Green Mark for Buildings Award (Platinum) for its Education Resource Centre at NUS’ University Town (UTown);
  - the Green Mark for Buildings Award (Gold) for NUS Business School’s Mochtar Riady Building;
  - the Green Mark for Buildings Award (Certified) for T-Lab at NUS, a joint development project between NUS and Defence Science and Technology Agency; and
  - the Green Mark for Districts Award (Gold Plus) for UTown.

- **Dr Grant Sklar** received the inaugural American College of Clinical Pharmacy’s (ACCP) Adult Medicine Practice and Research Network Clinical Practice Award. Dr Sklar, who is also an Associate Principal Clinical Pharmacist at the National University Hospital (NUH), received the award in recognition of his work in adult medicine pharmacy clinical practice at a ceremony held in North Carolina, USA, in April this year.

  “This is by far the most prestigious award I have received in my 20-year career. It is especially gratifying to me because it recognises my work at NUH over the last 10 years, particularly in providing care for patients. As a pharmacist, that is the most important thing to me,” said Dr Sklar. Dr Sklar, who specialises in Adult General Medicine, came to Singapore in 1999. He is one of 32 Pharmacotherapy Specialists in Singapore certified by the US Board of Pharmacy Specialties.

- **NUS was also pleased to have contributed to the development of the National University Health System’s (NUHS) Administration Block for which NUHS received the Green Mark for Buildings Award (Gold Plus).**

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- **Three among the top five scholarships of choice in Singapore were offered by NUS, according to the 2010 BrightSparks Scholarship and Career Survey published by JobsFactory. Top ‘A’ Level and International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma students in Singapore ranked the NUS Undergraduate Scholarship first in their choice of scholarship, followed by the NUS Undergraduate Merit Scholarship (in second place), and the NUS Faculty Scholarship (in fourth place). A significant 92.7 per cent of top students interested in local tertiary education also voted for NUS as the preferred tertiary institution in which to study.**

**NUS amongst top 3 universities in Asia**

NUS was once again ranked amongst the leading universities in Asia. This year’s Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Asian University Rankings (AUR), released on 13 May 2010, placed NUS in the third spot. Published annually, the QS AUR ranks Asia’s top 500 universities based on criteria such as the quality of research through citations and the proportion of international staff and students.

NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan said: “We are pleased that NUS is recognised as one of the leading universities in Asia. To be consistently placed amongst the leading universities in the region and the world is testament to the significant contributions made by NUS faculty and researchers towards a high quality global education and cutting-edge research. NUS’ global outlook and culture of excellence have enabled us to continuously create distinctive value for our students, graduates, country and society. We will continue to build on our strengths in education and research in pursuit of our goal to be an institution of distinction in Asia and the world.”

Commenting on the growing prominence of Asian universities, Prof Tan said: “The dramatic growth and vibrancy of Asia is attracting top students and scholars from around the world. The influx of global talents will further accelerate the stature and the standing of Asian universities. As a global university centred in Asia, NUS will continue to build strong alliances and to partner institutions from Asia and beyond. NUS will also leverage on our insights and expertise in Asia to develop innovative programmes that will nurture future leaders who are able to excel and thrive in diverse environments.”

**Dr Grant Sklar**

Dr Grant Sklar, an Assistant Professor at the NUS Department of Pharmacy, won the inaugural ACCP Adult Medicine Practice and Research Network Clinical Practice Award. Dr Sklar, who is also an Associate Principal Clinical Pharmacist at the National University Hospital (NUH), received the award in recognition of his work in adult medicine pharmacy clinical practice at a ceremony held in North Carolina, USA, in April this year.

“...”

**Honoured: Dr Grant Sklar (left) receiving the award from Dr Brian Hemstreet, a member of the Adult Medicine Practice and Research Network Nominations Committee**

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**Mark of Excellence**

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Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School names its advisory colleges

As of 19 May 2010, the four advisory colleges of Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School had taken on new names of legendary figures in medicine. They are now known as Gordon Arthur Ransome College, Seah Cheng Siang College, Benjamin Sheares College and Eugene Stead College. The four medical personalities who inspired these names were all remarkable for their great achievements and exemplary in their compassion and willingness to serve others. Holding them up as role models, the medical school and its College Masters have begun to define the character and direction of the colleges, in hope of nurturing caring physicians and excellent clinician scientists dedicated to lifelong learning and service to society, like these illustrious forerunners.

Gift from Goh Foundation improves lives of children with cancer

A S$12 million gift from the Goh Foundation to the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM) will save many children’s lives by helping to fund a new treatment of childhood cancer in Singapore and Asia. Among other programmes, the gift enabled a trial for children with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL), granting patients the chance to live relatively normal lives once their cancer had been treated.

Previously, when fighting ALL, the focus had been on using the maximum treatment possible to overcome the cancer. The new trial limited side effects by tailoring the treatment to the specific risk of the patient. Technology was used to determine the level of leukaemia, adjust the amount of treatment accordingly and reduce incidences of infection, bleeding, drop in Intelligence Quotient and heart damage.

Assoc Prof Allen Yeoh from the Department of Paediatrics, YLLSoM, who is also a Senior Consultant from University Children’s Medical Institute, National University Hospital, said: “This was the first time we were able to work with a philanthropic body to translate research into real treatments and cures for children with cancer. People often focus on ‘sexy’ cures. We were not trying to be heroes. We just wanted to focus on curing the highest number of patients with the least amount of side effects so they could go on to live normal long lives. Funding from the Goh Foundation also allows us to train specialist nurses who help doctors to administer the protocol. This comprehensive element is where the gift really improves the lives of children with cancer.”

ASSOC PROF ALLEN YEOH: Posing for a picture with a patient