MOH’s first chief health scientist

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, the former president of the National University of Singapore, has served as the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) first chief health scientist since 2018.

He was MOH’s director of medical services from 2000 to 2004, during which he led the public health response to the Sars crisis in Singapore.

As chief health scientist, his main role is to set the research agenda and to work closely with researchers across institutions in Singapore to address high-priority public health and clinical needs.

This is done in three ways amid the pandemic.

First, he works with the Covid-19 research workgroup, chaired by National Centre for Infectious Diseases executive director Leo Yee Sin, to share samples, collect information and do research.

The workgroup comprises 18 other members from the ministry, public healthcare institutions, the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*Star), and DSO National Laboratories.

Second, he chairs the grant review panel for the Covid-19 research fund, for which MOH and the National Medical Research Council have set aside $20 million.

Third, Prof Tan also works closely with Singapore’s researchers, clinicians, as well as A*Star to help develop tests and treatments that can be used in hospitals and public health intervention operations.

Yuen Sin