

## Dream Big



Since its inception in 2012, the Academic Medicine Research Institute (AMRI) has been at the forefront in providing administrative, scientific and technical support and resources for the research community in SingHealth and Duke-NUS Medical School (Duke-NUS), by serving as an academic nexus in our Academic Medical Centre (AMC).

Over the past 10 years, AMRI played an important role in contributing to the growth of research in the AMC. Today, the AMC generates more than 1,200 publications in international peer-reviewed journals annually and continues to nurture a growing pool of national clinician scientists. How did AMRI become what it is today? In an interview with Prof Ivy Ng, GCEO, SingHealth, she shares some of AMRI's secrets to success.

### **AMRI's Beginnings**

When AMRI was conceptualised, Prof Ng and Prof Ranga Krishnan (former Dean of Duke-NUS) envisioned AMRI as a "training ground" or an "incubator" that helps to groom budding researchers. After numerous presentations, meetings and small-group discussions, AMRI was launched as an academic nexus that catalyses the growth of clinician scientists and facilitates the increasing number of research activities in the AMC. Aspiring researchers were invited to present developing ideas to further refine their study design, be matched to a mentor or statistician, or harness existing resources and capabilities within the AMC to accelerate research breakthroughs and find solutions to improve diagnosis and treatment for our patients.

An initiative that was specifically designed to help develop Clinician Scientists and Clinician Investigators was the Khoo Scholars Programme (KSP) that provides essential pilot funding to increase our researchers' grant competitiveness at the national level.

### Trust is Key

AMRI today is well-positioned to provide the infrastructure and aid for conducting translational and clinical research in the AMC: from providing technical support through centralised core research facilities, to ensuring compliance with research related policies and guidelines, to protecting intellectual property and facilitating multi-party agreements with industry. When asked about AMRI's unique strength in achieving research excellence, Prof Ng replied in a heartbeat, "Trust."

She said, "Trust is critical and very precious, so we need to always guard it fiercely. Dean and I have regular meetings that's no holds barred, where we can **highlight worries and concerns and address them immediately or as soon as possible, without letting things ferment. That's been key.** And trust has to happen at every level across the AMC to keep us successful."

### People Forms Our Pulse

Without people to help drive it to where it is today, AMRI as an enabling platform would remain as a mere structure. "We are only as good as the leadership in place. Structures evolve based on what we need. Certain things that worked before needs to be modified, or we need new structures to deal with the evolving healthcare needs and demands," Prof Ng said.

**"At AMRI and the wider AMC, having people who are dedicated and want to do the right thing provides us with tremendous strength to deal with whatever comes our way, and allows us to continue to flourish even amid challenging times such as this pandemic."**

### Future Outlook

The path to distinguishing ourselves is not an easy one, but we must continue to push the frontiers of Medicine.

**"We aspire for this AMC to be among the top 3 globally. I honestly believe we can get there,"** said Prof Ng. **"With the support of AMRI, we are already beginning to see how research achievements are impacting disease outcomes through enhanced approaches to prevention, earlier diagnoses, better stratification of diseases for more targeted treatment and so much more. We have tremendous talent in our AMC and a number of unique characteristics that allow us to dream big,"** she said.

*Prof Ivy Ng has been the Group CEO of SingHealth since January 2012, and has played a pivotal role in the conception and development of AMRI. We are honoured to have the privilege to share her vision for AMRI and the AMC as a whole.*