

Building A Better Future with AMRI



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).

During its opening ceremony about a decade ago, Prof Ranga Rama Krishnan, the former Dean of Duke-NUS, emphasised the role of AMRI in cultivating mindsets of curiosity towards innovation. In an interview with Prof Ranga, who has contributed to the establishment of AMRI, we find out more about his journey with the institute, which was originally known as the Clinical & Translational Research Institute (CTRI) under Office of Clinical Sciences in Duke-NUS.

Striving Toward a Shared Goal

In early 2000s, Singapore first drove the development of basic science, and medical and biological research with growing expertise and capabilities from the Agency for Science, Research and Technology (A*STAR). A few years later, Duke-NUS paved the way for training clinician scientists to support clinical and translational research in Singapore.

With Duke-NUS building up the training and infrastructure for clinical research, Prof Ranga shared about his focus when he first reached Singapore, “We had to build a culture, mindset and then introduce fundamental aspects of asking the right question, framing the study design and learning

how to use statistics to answer the question.” This long-term goal was what led to the onboard of the first Executive Director of AMRI, Prof Augustus John Rush, who moved to Singapore and joined Prof Ranga in advancing their shared goal for SingHealth and Duke-NUS Medical School.

Along with nationwide efforts to position Singapore as an innovation-driven, knowledge-based economy, SingHealth and Duke-NUS launched a number of strategic research programmes and built relevant research infrastructure which contributed to the creation of CTRI. The institute was first conceived with students, trainees and faculty in mind, before extending to clinician scientists at SingHealth and Duke-NUS Medical School. “Prof John Rush was instrumental in getting CTRI off the ground, and also helping it evolve with SingHealth into AMRI”, said Prof Ranga with reference to Prof John Rush modelling AMRI after a successful implementation of a multidisciplinary strategy at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

Shaping our Future Together

“We recruited some of the best minds and the journey accelerated as evinced today by the extent and breadth of research on this campus,” remarked Prof Ranga. With so many inspiring clinician scientists, numerous patents and startups, and an innovative dynamic culture, SingHealth Duke-NUS AMC today is standing at the forefront of innovative translational and clinical research in various fields spanning across oncology, ophthalmology, cardiology, neurosciences; and emerging infectious diseases, inflammation and immunology, which are augmented by cross-cutting research themes such as population health, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data, etc. Besides thanking Prof John Rush for his contributions, Prof Ranga attributed the growing journey of AMRI’s success to different people who have been involved in the institute’s establishment.

“The multiple research institutes and successful trainees including many students from Duke-NUS makes me proud and to have achieved all these within such a short time, we owe a lot to the many people who were involved in its creation, and nurturance both from SingHealth and Duke-NUS,” said Prof Ranga.

About Prof Ranga Rama Krishnan

A renowned global leader in academic medicine and healthcare, and in Singapore’s health and biomedical research scene, Prof Ranga Rama Krishnan, the inaugural and current Chairman of National Health Innovation Centre (NHIC), recently received Singapore’s highest honor – the 2020 President’s Science and Technology Medal – for his significant contributions in advancing our health and biomedical research and innovation sector. He is currently the second CEO of the Rush University System for Health, and was previously the dean of Rush Medical College from 2015 to 2019.

Prof Ranga supported Prof John Rush in establishing the AMRI in 2012 while serving as the former Dean of Duke-NUS Medical School.

We are honoured to have the privilege to share his vision and to recognise his contributions to AMRI.