

The Clinical Nutrition Research Centre (CNRC) helps to build the Singapore Food Story with its inaugural ASEAN Nutrition and Food Science Network (ANFSN) meeting

To foster sharing and collaborations among food and nutrition experts in the region, CNRC hosted its first ANFSN conference that brought together over 120 food and nutrition scientists from Malaysia and Singapore.



Singapore, October 2019 – As part of its continuing efforts to advance translational human nutrition research and make food the new medicine, the Clinical Nutrition Research Centre (CNRC) held its first ASEAN Nutrition and Food Science Network (ANFSN) meeting at Park Avenue Rochester on 10 and 11 October 2019.

Organised by the Director of CNRC, Professor Christiani Jeyakumar Henry, and his team of early career researchers – Dr Keri McCrickerd, Dr Sumanto Haldar and Dr Stefan Gerardus Joseph Anna Camps – the two-day conference brought together over 60 scientists from eight universities in Malaysia and 60 scientists from the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Landmark season for Singapore’s food and nutrition sector

With the Singapore Food Story R&D programme taking off and the Singapore Food Agency’s (SFA) ambitious goal to produce 30 percent of Singapore’s nutritional needs locally by 2030, it’s clear that Singapore’s food and nutrition sector is entering a season of exponential growth.

During his keynote presentation, Assistant Chief Executive of A*STAR’s Biomedical Research Council (BMRC), Dr Benjamin Seet, reiterated Singapore’s visionary plans for our food and nutrition landscape, and shared how these strategies aptly encapsulate the work that CNRC does.

Professor Chong Yap Seng, Executive Director of the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences (SICS), also highlighted the institute’s ground-breaking Growing Up in Singapore Towards healthy Outcomes (GUSTO) longitudinal birth cohort study. GUSTO’s findings provided the seedbed for developments in SICS’ clinical nutrition research, which eventually led to the

birth of CNRC – the first centre in Asia equipped with under-one-roof capabilities to perform research across the food chain and at all levels, from cellular to whole-body nutrition.

Set up in late 2012, CNRC understands how integral nutrition and food science research is to Singapore's economy and through the inception of ANFSN, it hopes to build bridges for food innovation and contribute to important areas such as sustainable urban food production, alternative proteins, and food safety science – both locally and regionally.

Bringing nutrition and food science into the Asian context

To help turn the page on the Singapore Food Story, CNRC has launched ANFSN with the objectives of assembling like-minded scientists from Southeast Asia who possess a passion for nutrition and food science, creating a platform for them to share their knowledge and findings, and fostering fruitful regional collaborations that will advance research and create a global impact.

In his keynote speech on the second day of ANFSN, Professor Henry who is also the Deputy Executive Director and Programme Director of Clinical Nutrition at SICS, shared the importance of drawing lessons from history and how Asia has a major role to play in developing nutrition as a science. The discovery of thiamine as a cause of 'beri-beri' was seminal in demonstrating the role of vitamins, and represented the best of East and West; through work done by Dutch physicians Eijkman and Voderman in Batavia, now present-day Jakarta. Given the emphasis on food as medicine across multiple Asian cultures, Professor Henry emphasised the need to draw from our cultural inheritance to build and enhance modern day food science and nutrition for health.

Many of the studies presented at ANFSN were specific to the Asian phenotype, which are pertinent to developing and enhancing nutrition and food science locally and in the region.

Coordinated by researchers in the early stages of their careers and supported by those more established in their fields, the first ANFSN meeting helped to lay the foundation for subsequent generations of nutrition and food science researchers and professionals.

Said Professor Henry, "The level of engagement and passion shown by both our Singaporean and Malaysian colleagues has convinced us that this networking to nurture nutrition and food science in the region is a highly worthwhile pursuit."

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About the Clinical Nutrition Research Centre

The Clinical Nutrition Research Centre (CNRC) is a joint initiative between the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences (SICS), the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and the National University Health System (NUHS). The centre specialises in basic and translational human nutrition research involving studies across the life cycle. These include investigating the impact of macro- and micro- and extra- nutrient intake on human physiology, sensory properties, food behaviour and understanding the role of food structure on human nutrition and health.

About the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences

Founded in 2007, the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences' (SICS) mission is to promote health and human capacity in Singapore, Asia and globally. The first institute within the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) to focus on clinical sciences and translational research, SICS posits that health has its origins in good beginnings and continued interactions between our physiological makeup and environment. To fulfil our vision of building gateways and an evidence base for positive health, our institute strongly promotes clinical research that supports the understanding of metabolism, neuroscience and nutrition. The Clinical Nutrition Research Centre (CNRC) was set up in 2012 with the aim of advancing our translational human nutrition research efforts and making food the new medicine. By paving the way for scientific research to make a difference to the social and economic fabric of our communities, we are committed to 'Changing Tomorrow's Health, Today'.