

GENOME: THE GIS SPEAKER SERIES

Bats and Viruses: Lessons Beyond Infectious Diseases

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📍 GIS Seminar Room, L2 Genome, Biopolis, S(138672)



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Bats are increasingly recognised as a major reservoir host of most of the recently emerged zoonotic viruses. In the last 25 years, we have had multiple zoonotic diseases outbreaks caused by bat-borne viruses or probable bat viruses: Hendra in Australia (first detected in 1994), Nipah in Malaysia/Singapore (1998/9), SARS outbreak (2002/3), MERS outbreak (2012), large scale Ebola virus outbreak (2014) and SARS-CoV-2 (2019/20).

In this presentation, I will discuss the lessons learnt from studying bat-borne emerging zoonotic viruses and bat immunology in the context of better preparing for future pandemics and translating “bat knowledge” into improving human health in general.

Linfa Wang is a professor of the Programme in Emerging Infectious Diseases at Duke-NUS Medical School, and the inaugural executive director of PREPARE, Ministry of Health, Singapore. He is an international leader in the field of emerging zoonotic viruses and virus-host interaction. His current research focuses on why bats are such an important reservoir for emerging viruses and on how we can learn from bats to make us more resilience to infection and diseases in general. He is a member of the WHO SARS Scientific Research Advisory Committee and played a key role in identification of bats as the natural host of SARS-like viruses. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, he has served/is serving on multiple WHO committees for COVID-19, including the WHO IHR Emergency Committee. Prof Wang has more than 500 scientific publications, including papers in Science, Nature, NEJM and Lancet. Prof Wang was elected to the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering in 2010 and the American Academy of Microbiology in 2021. He received the Singapore President Science Award in 2021.