

# Experts: More funds needed for the fight against pandemic diseases

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**SINGAPORE** – International health experts want more funds to be channelled towards preventing the spread of pandemic diseases such as Sars and H1N1, including devoting resources on preventing the infection in animals before the diseases are transmitted to humans.

They raised this point yesterday with Health Minister Khaw Boon Wan during a forum at the National University of Singapore (NUS) on improving health in Asia.

According to the experts, the traditional way authorities combat these diseases is problematic.

Professor David Heymann, chairman of the Health Protection Agency in the United Kingdom, said: “We are identifying disease first in humans and then we go back and find the animal in which it’s occurring.

“What we would like to see is the infection first identified in animals and prevented from coming to humans, or even moving back further to understanding how animals are getting infected and then making sure that

they don’t get infected.”

Prof Heymann said funding a collaborative approach with veterinary sectors is one way outbreaks can be prevented.

Other health professionals also wanted the focus to be on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes.

“We want to see a large amount of money put into the prevention of these diseases because they have a huge impact on economies of countries. In fact, it could bankrupt the economies of a number of Asian countries unless the non-communicable diseases are prevented,” said Professor Paul Zimmet, Director of the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, Melbourne, Australia.

These concerns will form part of an initiative by the NUS to develop research to combat health issues in Asia.

The NUS Initiative to Improve Health in Asia (NIHA) is an integrative initiative set up to improve public health and healthcare delivery in Asia.

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