FOREWORD

Communicable diseases refer to a host of illnesses caused by microbial agents that can be spread directly or indirectly from one person to another. For effective prevention and control of communicable diseases in a dense populated city state like Singapore, surveillance is key. I am pleased to present the Ministry of Health’s report entitled, “Communicable Diseases Surveillance, Singapore 2017”

The information gathered in this report has been made possible through Singapore’s comprehensive and well established system of surveillance, epidemiology and response that is resident in the Ministry of Health. This publication aims to serve as an easy reference on communicable diseases for use by the medical and public health community. Our readership includes physicians, epidemiologists, microbiologists, laboratorians, journalists, academics, scientists and public health administrators.

With many public health concerns making headline news in 2017, we have been working hard to safeguard health and wellbeing in our community. Besides providing an overview of the communicable diseases situation in Singapore, this report gives comprehensive coverage of specific notifiable diseases of public health importance that are air/droplet-borne, vector-borne, food-borne, blood-borne and borne by other routes. There is also a section on evaluation of childhood immunisation.

Vigilance in monitoring diseases is crucial for public health. Throughout the year, we carried out epidemiological surveillance to monitor the disease situation, pick up early outbreaks, and formulate and evaluate control strategies. Surveillance has also helped to identify secular disease trends, understand their epidemiology and guide public health policy. We also published the reporting guidelines on infectious diseases clusters for long term care institutions which aims to guide service providers in reporting infectious diseases clusters to the Ministry.

In August 2017, we investigated a fatal autochthonous diphtheria case in a migrant worker. This incident highlighted the risks for individual cases in under-vaccinated risk groups despite high vaccination coverage in the general population. Prompt implementation of public health measures and maintaining immunisation coverage are critical to prevent re-emergence of diphtheria.

The Ministry of Health would like to thank all healthcare professionals and our partner agencies for their support and dedication in combating and minimising the threats of communicable diseases, for the common goal of safeguarding public health.

We look forward to your continued support and cooperation.

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