

FOREWORD

2016 has been an eventful year for Singapore for emerging infectious diseases. While we may be a small country, we are well connected to many cities in the world. As Singapore continues to develop into a major global trade and travel hub, it is imperative that Singapore remains vigilant to public health threats, both locally and overseas, to safeguard the health of our population.

We carried out epidemiological surveillance and research of infectious diseases to monitor the disease situation, identify outbreaks, formulate and evaluate prevention and control strategies.

The Zika virus infection was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in 2016. In May of the year, we had our first imported Zika infection case returning from Brazil and subsequently, the first local cluster was reported in August in the Aljunied neighbourhood. A total of 298 cases were reported in the outbreak and it was contained in four weeks with prompt and coordinated national action.

Additionally, an unusual cluster of MDR-TB cases was detected in Ang Mo Kio. Fortunately, no further active TB cases linked to the cluster were detected after a massive screening exercise was conducted to rule out further transmission. TB remains a public health concern in Singapore and we need to continue engaging stakeholders and developing strategies to enhance our national TB programme.

We also worked on improvements to our national surveillance system to enhance our capability to respond to infectious diseases outbreaks. A healthcare epidemiology team was formed on 1 April 2016 to assist in the investigation of healthcare associated outbreaks. Notwithstanding, we have expanded the list of notifiable infectious diseases from 43 to 49 diseases, including botulism, tetanus, leptospirosis, murine typhus, rabies and Japanese encephalitis.

The purpose of this publication is to facilitate easy reference for public health officials, doctors, researchers and academics alike. I hope that you will find this report useful.

The Ministry 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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