

# FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce this inaugural annual report of the Ministry of Health on “*Communicable Diseases Surveillance in Singapore*”.

The year 2003 marked a significant milestone in public health developments in Singapore. With the integration of Ministry of the Environment’s Quarantine and Epidemiology Department with the Ministry of Health, there has been greater synergy in communicable diseases surveillance, prevention and control efforts. This was timely as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) emerged in the world and visited Singapore’s shores. The SARS outbreak presented us with new challenges and underscored the importance of constant vigilance for communicable diseases. As new diseases like SARS emerge, many old infectious diseases like dengue fever, chickenpox and viral hepatitis continue to pose a threat to public health. With globalisation and travel, Singapore is at an increased risk for importation of highly infectious diseases.

This annual report presents epidemiological information on communicable diseases obtained through various surveillance systems and from outbreak investigations. It serves as a good resource for public health professionals and medical practitioners, who are important partners in our national efforts in communicable disease prevention and control.

We hope that you will find the annual report useful. We look forward to your continued support and cooperation, as we face future public health challenges together.



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