

US profs made honorary citizens for contributions to Singapore healthcare

Linette Lai
Health Correspondent

Two American scientists have been conferred national honours for their contributions to healthcare in Singapore, receiving the Honorary Citizen Award from President Halimah Yacob at the Istana on Thursday.

They are Professor Ranga Krishnan, who chairs the National Medical Research Council, and Professor Duane Gubler, a dengue researcher at Duke-NUS Medical School, said the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the National Environment Agency (NEA) in a joint statement.

The award is the highest national honour given to foreigners. It is

conferred for life on those who have made outstanding contributions to Singapore's growth and development.

Prof Krishnan, 66, has held leadership positions in multiple national healthcare organisations. These include Duke-NUS Medical School, where he was dean from 2008 to 2015, as well as the Singapore Clinical Research Institute and the Health Sciences Authority.

He advises MOH on health and biomedical research, and his work has helped shape many aspects of Singapore's healthcare landscape. These range from the management of clinical trials to health sciences regulation.

Prof Krishnan said he was humbled and grateful to receive the award. "Singapore gave me a unique, once-in-a-lifetime oppor-



Duke-NUS Medical School dengue researcher Duane Gubler (left) and National Medical Research Council chairman Ranga Krishnan received the Honorary Citizen Award at the Istana on Thursday. PHOTO: MOH

tunity to be part of building a new medical school, and a truly outstanding academic health system.

"I am thankful for that opportunity and for the chance to participate in the transformation of Singapore's health system and biotech sector to be a true global leader."

Prof Gubler, who is founding director of Duke-NUS' Emerging Infectious Diseases Programme and emeritus professor at the school, also said he was honoured by the award.

"My first visit to Singapore was over 50 years ago, before shopping centres and high-rise condos and

hotels dotted the skyline," said the 83-year-old. "I have watched Singapore evolve into a global public health and economic leader, becoming a model for other countries to emulate."

He added that he was proud to have been a part of this evolution, and thanked the Singaporean colleagues and friends with whom he has worked over the years.

Prof Gubler has been working with Singapore since the 1970s, when he attended a dengue meeting held here by the World Health Organisation.

Like Prof Krishnan, he has served as adviser to various government agencies and helped shape the country's dengue control strategy.

Prof Gubler currently chairs the NEA's Dengue Expert Advisory Panel. This panel guides the agency in developing the anti-dengue Wolbachia technology, which involves the release of male mosquitoes infected with the Wolbachia bacteria to control the population of dengue-transmitting female mosquitoes.

linettel@sph.com.sg