

Singapore National Eye Centre and Santen Announce a Strategic Partnership to Develop and Deploy Internationally an Innovative Educational Programme for Development of the Eye Care Ecosystem in Asia

30 September, 2021, Singapore – Singapore National Eye Centre (hereinafter, SNEC) and Santen Pharmaceutical Co. Ltd., (hereinafter, Santen) today announced a strategic partnership to jointly develop and deploy internationally an enhanced educational programme deploying a combined online and offline platform to address the shortage of trained healthcare professionals supply to contribute to development of the eye care ecosystem throughout the region. The first initiative under the partnership is the Ophthalmic Technician (OT) training program in Singapore.

Blindness and visual impairment affects at least 2.2 billion people around the world, of whom at least 1.1 billion have a visual impairment that could have been prevented or is yet to be addressed. ¹ Although trained ophthalmic healthcare professionals would be fundamental for the access to better eye care services, the lack of educational capacity and opportunity limit the numbers of these important eye care providers. ² The United Nations General Assembly recently adopted a new resolution to accelerate action improving access to better eye care services to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ³ With this crucial global call for action to achieve equity in vision care, it is even more important to focus on developing efforts to improve eye care workforce capacity.

World Health Organization has encouraged task-shifting where specific tasks are moved, where appropriate, from highly qualified health workers to health workers with shorter training and fewer qualifications in order to make more efficient use of the available human resources for health. ⁴ Previous case study indicates that task-shifting of transferrable eye care practice from Ophthalmologists to well-trained OT has been effective to enhance the hospital productivity. ⁵ The SNEC-Santen partnership aims to establish educational programs in eye care, promote task shifting, and dramatically increase the number of future eye care professionals. Funding of the initiatives under this strategic partnership is supported by Santen, the SNEC VisionSave campaign and funding provided by a dollar for dollar matching by Tote Board and Singapore Government.

Prof Wong Tien Yin, Medical Director, SNEC and Deputy Group CEO (Research & Education), SingHealth said that “SNEC’s online programme will benefit allied eye care professionals by providing them with appropriate training during the pandemic and beyond. We are continuously preparing a new generation eye care workforce to meet the evolving needs of a rapidly ageing population and the associated

increased prevalence of eye disease not just in Singapore but also around the world. For participants, self-paced learning can take place anytime and anywhere and continuous learning will enhance their skills so that they are better equipped to provide high quality eye care for patients. SNEC will also be extending the relevant program internationally that enables allied eye care professionals around the world. We thank Santen and the Singapore Tote Board for their strong support, which has helped translate the proposed OT programme into reality.”

“We are pleased to announce our strategic partnership with SNEC, recognized as a center-of excellence for ophthalmic education globally. As a specialized company dedicated to Ophthalmology, Santen strategically addresses social issues related to human eye health and accelerates development of the Eye Care Ecosystem. This strategic partnership will provide better eye care by accelerating the enhancement of eye care capacity through educating ophthalmic professionals”, said Shigeo Taniuchi, President and CEO of Santen. “As noted in our WORLD VISION, Santen believes that this strategic partnership contribute to “Happiness with Vision” for people around the world.”

Ms Joey Poh Shu Zhen, a graduate from our pilot programme said, “The interdisciplinary course not only allowed me to pursue knowledge within and even beyond my job scope, it provided an opportunity to have an overview of how various departments work together for the holistic management of every patient”. Ms Jessie Koh Hui Xin, another graduate said, "Covid-19 pandemic generally slowed programme progression and certain measures such as converting our some lessons from face to face lectures to online lessons. We could smoothly adopt to the pandemic situation as this online-merged-offline education programme was available. All the students from my batch were also able to graduate successfully. This state-of-art education program would be useful after the pandemic as well.”

It is expected that in a rapidly ageing society there will be increase in the number of patients with eye disease. To serve patients adequately in terms of quality and quantity, the enhancement of eye care capacity and productivity is one of the key long-term issues in most society. In addition, eye health in the society is essential to achieve SDGs. SNEC and Santen, through this strategic partnership, will jointly contribute to better eye health throughout the region.

Reference

1. World Health Organization. World report on vision. 2019.
2. World Health Organization. Resolution A/66/11, Universal Eye Health: A Global Action Plan 2014-2019, WHO, Geneva, May 2013
3. United Nations. Resolution A/75/L.108
4. World Health Organization. Task shifting: rational redistribution of tasks among health workforce teams: global

recommendations and guidelines. 2008.

5. Mary G. et.al. Eye Care Productivity and Access in the Veterans Affairs Health Care System. *Military Medicine*. 2017; 182: e1631-e1635.

About SNEC

Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) was incorporated in 1989 and commenced operations in 1990. It is the designated national centre within the public sector healthcare network, and spearheads and coordinates the provision of specialized ophthalmological services with emphasis on quality education and research. Since its opening in 1990, SNEC has achieved rapid growth and currently manages an annual workload of 330,000 outpatient visits, 34,000 major eye surgeries and laser procedures. Ten subspecialties in Cataract, Cataract and Comprehensive Ophthalmology, Corneal and External Eye Disease, Glaucoma, Neuro-Ophthalmology, Oculoplastic and Aesthetic Eyeplastic, Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus, Refractive Surgery, Ocular Inflammation and Immunology and Retina (Medical & Surgical) have been established to provide a full range of eye treatment from comprehensive to tertiary levels for the entire spectrum of eye conditions.

For more information, please visit SNEC's website (www.snec.com.sg)

About Santen

As a specialized company dedicated to ophthalmology, Santen carries out research, development, marketing, and sales of pharmaceuticals, over-the-counter products, and medical devices, and its products now reach patients in over 60 countries. Toward realizing "WORLD VISION" (Happiness with Vision), the world Santen ultimately aspires to achieve, as a "Social Innovator", we aim to reduce the social and economic opportunity loss of people around the world caused by eye diseases and defects by orchestrating and mobilizing key technologies and players around the world. With scientific knowledge and organizational capabilities nurtured over a 130-year history, Santen provides products and services to contribute to the well-being of patients, their loved ones and consequently to society. For more information, please visit Santen's website (www.santen.com).

About Singapore Tote Board

Established in 1988, Tote Board (Singapore Totalisator Board) is a statutory board of the Ministry of Finance. As a broad-based grantmaking organisation, Tote Board works closely with stakeholders and partners, to support broad and diverse worthy projects in the sectors of Arts, Community Development, Education, Health, Social Service and Sports. Through these projects, Tote Board helps to uplift the community by giving hope to vulnerable groups and improving the lives of all in Singapore. Tote Board's source of grants is derived from operating surplus of the Tote Board Group, which comprises Tote Board and its wholly-owned subsidiary Singapore Pools (Private) Limited and Singapore Turf Club, a proprietary

club owned by Tote Board. Tote Board also ensures that Singapore Pools (Private) Limited and the Singapore Turf Club conduct their gaming and racing businesses in a socially responsible manner, to provide legal, safe and trusted gaming as a means to counter illegal gambling. Tote Board's goal is to help build a flourishing society in Singapore. We want to inspire positive change and contribute towards building an inclusive, resilient and vibrant community, while fostering a caring and compassionate nation.

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