

SINGAPORE

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NUMBER OF CASES OF FALLEN WINDOWS RECORDED ACROSS SINGAPORE FROM JANUARY TO LAST MONTH | B3



New bacteria species named after S'pore upon local discovery

Team of docs made discovery while analysing skin and wound samples

Clara Chong

An unexpected discovery by a team of doctors analysing skin and wound samples has led to a new species of bacteria being identified and named after Singapore.

Staphylococcus singaporensis sp.nov (*S. singaporensis*) is part of the *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) complex, which commonly causes conditions from mild skin and wound infections to surgical and more serious bloodstream infections that may be fatal.

The discovery was published in the International Journal of Systematic and Evolutionary Microbiology on Oct 26.

This complex is a group of four different species, including *S. singa-*

porensis, that have a similar genetic make-up.

Associate Professor Raymond Lin, director of the National Public Health Laboratory at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID), said yesterday that everyone will likely be infected by *S. aureus* at some point in their lives.

To isolate and identify the Singapore bacteria, research groups from the National University Hospital (NUH), NCID and Singapore General Hospital had studied bacteria isolates, which appeared related to *S. aureus*, between April 2019 and July 2019.

Isolates are bacteria grown in a laboratory.

Whole genome sequencing of the isolates was then performed and comparative genome analysis found that six out of the 43 of these

MORE TAILORED CARE

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DR CHEW KA LIP, a consultant in microbiology at NUH's Department of Laboratory Medicine, referring to the differences between the new species and other organisms.

isolates were quite different from other members of the *S. aureus* complex.

These six isolates were confirmed to be a new species – the Singapore bacteria.

"This new species probably existed all along and nobody noticed it earlier," said Prof Lin, who is also the head and senior consultant in microbiology at the Department of Laboratory Medicine in NUH.

Based on what is known so far, the new species is susceptible to commonly used antibiotics, unlike some *S. aureus* species that have developed multi-drug resistance.

S. singaporensis also lacks many of the toxin genes frequently found in *S. aureus*.

However, more data needs to be collected over time, both locally and globally, to fully understand the impact of the new species.

Identifying a new species enables scientists to analyse and predict more precisely the outcomes of infections due to various species, Prof Lin added.

Dr Chew Ka Lip, a consultant in microbiology at NUH's Department of Laboratory Medicine, added: "There remains much to be done to understand the differences, if any, between these organisms in terms of clinical infections and prognosis.

"This could potentially lead to more tailored clinical care management of our patients to optimise outcomes."

All six isolates have also been deposited in international strain repositories.

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From left: Dr Chew Ka Lip; NUH Department of Laboratory Medicine principal scientific officer for microbiology Dr Jeanette Teo (holding a sample of the new species); and Associate Professor Raymond Lin. They were part of the team that discovered the new species, *Staphylococcus singaporensis* sp.nov. PHOTO: NUH

Worker dies after being crushed under falling steel bars at worksite

Kok Yufeng

A Bangladeshi construction worker, 31, died last Saturday morning after he was crushed under a load of steel bars that fell on him.

At the time of the accident, the steel bars were being lifted by a tower crane, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) told The Straits Times.

The fatal incident occurred at a worksite in Bedok Reservoir Park, where a clubhouse for Home Team national servicemen (NSMen) is being built.

The police said they were alerted to the accident at 900 Bedok North Road at about 9.30am.

The worker, who was employed by Chin Lee Construction, was taken to Changi General Hospital, where he died from his injuries.

The police and MOM are investigating the incident.

MOM has also told the occupier of the site, CMC Construction, to stop all lifting operations there.

There have now been at least 35 workplace deaths this year, compared with 30 deaths in 2020 and 39 deaths in 2019.

Last month, the Workplace Safety and Health Council had warned companies and workers to be vigilant and follow safe work procedures as the festive season approaches.

At least two workplace deaths occurred in November, both involving migrant workers.

On Nov 15, a 35-year-old Indian national slipped and fell to the ground while he was trying to board the platform of a boom lift from the fourth storey of a building that was under construction in Boon Lay.

On Nov 18, another Indian national, 43, was operating a vibratory roller, which is used to compact soil, when the machine toppled and trapped him in the cabin.

This happened at a worksite for the upcoming Changi East project, which includes the construction of Changi Airport Terminal 5 and a third runway for the airport.

In the latest accident, the developer of the worksite is HomeTeamNS.

A HomeTeamNS spokesman said in a statement that the association is deeply saddened by the incident and it is working with CMC Construction to provide assistance and support to the deceased worker's family.

"We will work with our contractor... and extend full cooperation to aid the authorities in their investigation," the spokesman added.

The ground-breaking for the four-storey clubhouse in Bedok was done in 2019.

At the time, it was one of three new HomeTeamNS clubhouses that had been in the works.

The clubhouse in Khatib opened in April and the one in Bedok is expected to be ready at the end of next year. A clubhouse in Tengah will be completed between 2030 and 2035.

Costing an estimated \$79 million, the Bedok Reservoir Park clubhouse will be water-themed and is expected to feature facilities such as an infinity pool and a three-storey indoor water adventure area with Singapore's longest indoor water slide at 114m long.

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Number of workplace deaths this year, compared with 30 deaths in 2020 and 39 deaths in 2019.



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