

# New research lab gets \$37m to study major eye diseases

---

**Yuen Sin**

---

---

---

The Singapore Eye Research Institute (Seri) yesterday announced a five-year collaboration with Japanese company Santen Pharmaceutical to conduct research on major eye diseases in Asia.

A total of \$37 million will be invested in a joint Santen-Seri lab at the Academia building near the Singapore General Hospital over the next five years.

The research will be partially funded by the Government's Research Innovation Enterprise 2020 Plan, which was unveiled last year to encourage innovation and technology adoption in companies.

The lab will open by the second half of this year. Local and Japanese research scientists will work together. The lab will initially be staffed by four researchers.

Seri executive director Aung Tin said an industry partnership will speed up the process of translating scientific research into products that help patients, such as new medication or surgical devices.

"It can be very daunting for scientists to form a start-up and raise funds on their own... but through this partnership, we will know immediately if (a discovery) is feasible as a project," said Professor Aung.

Speaking at the opening of the 32nd Asia Pacific Academy of Ophthalmology Congress at the Suntec Convention Centre yesterday, where the partnership was announced, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said vision-related disorders are the second-highest cause of disability burden here, and the fourth-highest cause of disease burden, according to a 2010 study.

"Looking ahead, the disease burden of ophthalmologic conditions is expected to increase as the population ages, particularly in Singapore," said Mr Gan, adding that research and innovation can play a role in providing better care for patients.

---

[yuensin@sph.com.sg](mailto:yuensin@sph.com.sg)