

**Official visit of Spain's Minister for Health and Consumer Affairs,  
Dr Bernat Soria Escoms, to Singapore  
28 March to 1 April 2009**

H.E. Dr Bernat Soria Escoms, Minister for Health and Consumer Affairs of Spain, is currently in Singapore with a five-member delegation for a 5-day official visit to local health institutions and industry partners.

2 In conjunction with the visit, Health Minister Mr Khaw Boon Wan was today conferred the title "Placa de la Orden Civil de Sanidad" (Plaque of the Health Civil Order) by H.E. Dr Soria. The Placa de la Orden Civil de Sanidad is the highest civil distinction awarded on behalf of His Majesty the King of Spain to reward relevant or exceptional merits, behaviours, activities or services in the field of health.

3 Mr Lim Hng Kiang, Minister for Trade and Industry, will similarly be conferred the award tomorrow, for the role played by the Ministry's statutory board, the Agency for Science, Technology & Research (A\*STAR) in promoting biomedical research cooperation between Singapore and Spain.

4 Dr Soria and his delegation are in Singapore to exchange views on biomedical research and developments, and to explore possibilities for collaboration between both countries' research institutes and hospitals in areas such as cancer and cardiology. The two health ministers discussed developments on translational and clinical research, including Singapore's infectious diseases research efforts, as well as organ transplant programmes.

5 Dr Soria will be visiting the Singapore General Hospital later today to tour its facilities and learn more about Singapore's efforts on chronic diseases management, advanced cell therapy and e-health initiatives. Spain, like Singapore, aims to develop a shared national electronic health record that can be used by providers across the whole spectrum of healthcare delivery.

6 As part of his visit, Dr Soria, a leading expert in stem cell research in Spain, will give a lecture, **"The Spanish National Health System: Joining Efforts To Reach Quality And Fairness"** on 1 April at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. Dr Soria is no stranger to Singapore as he was a visiting professor at NUS from 2002-2005.

7 Minister Soria will also be visiting MTI, A\*STAR and other agencies while in Singapore. During his visit to A\*STAR, Dr Soria will visit Biopolis and Fusionopolis, Singapore's iconic hubs for biomedical sciences, and physical sciences and engineering R&D respectively. In particular, Dr Soria will have the chance to engage in discussions with stem cell researchers to find out more about the progress of A\*STAR's stem cell research. He will also tour the stem cell laboratories in A\*STAR's Institute of Medical Biology and Singapore Stem Cell Bank.



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