

## H1N1 FLU

# A true test of S'porean unity

Now is not the time for panic,  
calls to name and shame

Letter from Dr Bill Durodié

Senior Fellow, Coordinator

Homeland Defence Research Programme

Centre of Excellence for National Security

S Rajaratnam School of International Studies

FOR a country that prides itself on maintaining a sense of community, the response, at all levels, to reports that somebody may have unconsciously facilitated the spread of H1N1 in Singapore, reveals an unfortunate, and anti-social, underbelly.

Singaporeans remain at greater risk from seasonal influenza, dengue and other pathogens, let alone food poisoning and road traffic accidents — the latter causing about one-third

of all accidental deaths in any one year.

Shall we name and shame all those involved in these, too? And what about those who suffer preventable injuries from playing rugby, riding horses or participating in other sports, none of which are transmittable, but the social costs of which are borne by all?

In truth, it is the coverage of H1N1 that has been blown out of all proportion, not in Singapore, but internationally, that could be accused of being irresponsible. And catching it now may also enhance our resilience, rather than diminishing it.

In truth, we are an inter-dependent society, not simply an aggregate of individuals. Anyone who thinks otherwise should try the risks that come from living entirely alone. The reaction to this event speaks volumes of Singapore's real unity.

## NO FEES FOR CHANGED FLIGHTS

Letter from Loke Chee Kheong

In response to the recent surge of confirmed H1N1 cases in Singapore, a reader asked in yesterday's Voices pages: "Patient 49, was the trip to Melbourne all that necessary?"

While I am not in the position to answer this question for Patient 49, it made me realise that one of the key reasons a traveller may not cancel nor postpone a scheduled trip is the hefty fee imposed on a change of flight.

Only a few airlines have announced a waiver of such fees. Perhaps the decision should not be left to the airlines, but the authorities should make it mandatory for all airlines to waive such fees until the pandemic is over.