



Min Zheng in his lab at Shenzhen Bay Laboratory's Institute of Infectious Diseases.

# STRONG LEADERSHIP IN INFECTIOUS DISEASE RESEARCH

**SHENZHEN BAY LABORATORY** is intensifying its research programmes in viral infection.

**The Shenzhen Bay Laboratory (SZBL)**, located in Guangming Science City, was established in 2019 as a life science innovation hub. A fresh, open-minded establishment, unencumbered by tradition, SZBL is looking to recruit young scientists who are seeking to develop their careers as independent researchers. Min Zheng, is one such scientist who answered the call.

After working at the St Jude Children's research hospital as a postdoctoral fellow, Zheng recently joined SZBL's Institute of Infectious Diseases as a Junior Principal Investigator, and is establishing his own lab to investigate the key mechanism that causes inflammation in respiratory infections, such as influenza virus and coronaviruses.

"Overt inflammation has been shown to play a critical role in lung damage following SARS-CoV-2 infection. However, the host factors regulating this during both SARS-CoV-2 and influenza virus infection are largely unknown," says Zheng. "The goal of my lab is to identify these key regulators, as they may provide insight to help us develop medicines to target these diseases."

The Institute of Infectious Diseases at SZBL was founded in August 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and as part of the nation's plans to boost biomedical innovation in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). The institute is now establishing Biosafety Level 2 & 3 labs

which are essential for studying infectious pathogens.

Zheng moved to Shenzhen and SZBL in 2021, following his publications on inflammatory cytokines and innate immunity in *Nature Immunology* and *Cell*, respectively, and is now in the middle of recruiting his team and setting up his laboratory. "I love Shenzhen. It's a beautiful and special city, built up by people from all over China. It's always welcoming of people from the other provinces."

But it's the confluence of talents that attracted Zheng to the GBA and SZBL, in particular. "SZBL is a place where talents get together, and I believe we will grow quickly and make significant discoveries. As a newly established institution, I

believe SZBL will be more open-minded, and will provide young scientists with more chances to explore their interests," he says.

Zheng believes that the development of the GBA will create a positive feedback loop through the attraction of more high-tech companies and talents to the area, which will help his research at SZBL. "The distance limitation will be ruled out, so it will be a lot easier for us to work with a range of companies and talents." ■



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