

# PULSE@UM

**SPECIAL FEATURE**  
TRIBUTE TO OUR ACADEMICIANS

**#THROWBACK2018**  
FOM YEAR IN REVIEW

**WHAT'S ON**  
FOM RESEARCH ACTIVITIES  
& ACHIEVEMENTS

**THROUGH OUR LENS**  
AWARD WINNERS 2018



**UNIVERSITY  
OF MALAYA**

**FACULTY OF  
MEDICINE**

# CONTENTS



*Pulse@UM Team since 2018*

## 3 MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY DEAN

## 4 OUR PEOPLE, OUR STORY PROF DR CHENG HWEE MING: UNIVERSITY REDEFINED

PROF DR CHRISTINA TAN PHOAY LAY:  
AN OPEN LETTER FROM A FAMILY  
PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL EDUCATIONIST

PROF MOHD RAIS BIN MUSTAFA: A  
TALE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND  
PASSIONATE RESEARCH

PROF SIM SI MUJ: REFLECTION ON MY  
ACADEMIC JOURNEY

PROF JAMUNARANI A/P S VADIVELU:  
RENOWNED MICROBIOLOGIST AND  
MEDICAL EDUCATIONIST

## 18 #THROWBACK2018 YEAR IN REVIEW - FACULTY OF MEDICINE ACHIEVEMENTS: GRANTS AND PUBLICATIONS

## 19 WHAT'S ON RESEARCH WEEK 2018: E-HEALTH

DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE RESEARCH  
EXHIBITION 2018

## 24 THROUGH OUR LENS ASSOC PROF CHAN YOKE FUN: ASM TOP RESEARCH SCIENTISTS MALAYSIA 2018 AWARD WINNER

PROF DR ONN HASHIM: ASM RESEARCH  
FELLOWSHIP WINNER 2018

DATUK PROF DR AWANG BULGIBA AWANG  
MAHMUD: UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
EMINENT SCHOLAR EXCELLENCE AWARD

## 32 AWARDS AND RECOGNITION UNIVERSITI MALAYA EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS 2018

## 34 UPCOMING EVENTS

# MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY DEAN

**PROFESSOR DR NG CHIRK JENN**  
DEPUTY DEAN (RESEARCH)



**Warmest greetings!**

**It gives me great pleasure to write this message for the first issue of the Faculty of Medicine Research Bulletin in 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Prof Yvonne Lim who has recently left us to take up the**

**position as the Director of International Relations Office. She has been instrumental in moving research forward in the Faculty for the past three years – thank you, Yvonne!**

**2018 has been a challenging year for all of us at Faculty of Medicine; despite this, we continued to excel in our research (read #Throwback2018) and have successfully organized several research events (read What's On: e-Health Research Carnival and Department of Medicine Research Exhibition). And it is no surprise that some of our Faculty members have received national and international recognition for their excellent academic and research work – many congratulations! (Through Our Lens)**

**Last but not least, the highlight of this issue of PULSE@UM is the words of wisdom from our colleagues who have retired in the year 2018. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences and reflections – you are an inspiration to all of us as teachers, researchers and clinicians. You have taught us the importance of setting our goals right but being flexible in how we get there. Hope you enjoy reading this issue and please let us know how we can improve PULSE@UM to serve you better.**

**With best wishes,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ng Chirk Jenn'.

**Professor Dr Ng Chirk Jenn**

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# OUR PEOPLE, OUR STORY

## PROFESSOR DR CHENG HWEE MING: UNIVERSITY REDEFINED - A PHYSIOLOGIST REFLECTS ON HIS CONVOLUTED JOURNEY

I started teaching Physiology in 1986 to my first class of medical students, and in recent years teaching the children of my early batches of medics. I went through the usual academic promotion-induced pathway of research and writing papers. But my pride and joy remains with teaching, helping students to understand and enjoy physiology, a key cornerstone of clinical medicine. Below are a few pertinent observations, thoughts and concerns for the changing academia. Is there hope for better homeostatic regulation in our universities?

Two aspects of the initial university model, autonomy and academic freedom, are increasingly less prominent, though admirable intrinsic characteristics that used to define the nature of a university, as a center for learning, thought and creativity. Extrinsic factors and pressures have not helped to enrich and inspire university life, but rather the converse. The university is progressively more market-driven. Documentation, quantitation of less essential parameters over quality teaching and education are evident. The annual 'Ranked or be Yanked' exercise consumes much time and energy. More meetings are needed for such data, to analyse, promote and market achievements that can be publicized.

Jerry Muller in his insightful book 'Tyranny of Metrics' highlights that the obsession with quantifying human performance threatens our schools, universities, medical care, businesses and governments. It's done in the belief that

the path to success is such quantitation and publicizing the results and distributing the rewards based on the numbers.

The key performance index of the heads of university departments is dependent on the key performance indexes of the staff. The key performance index of the Dean of the faculty hinges on the combined key performance indexes of the component departments and thus this 'merit go round' continues to turn.

I have taught for more than three decades in a university medical school. I tell my younger colleagues that I do not envy them as they are involuntarily caught up in this performance wheel. They have less unpressured time to read and prepare lectures. Less unhurried time to be creative and less time to have interactions with students, whom the university should exist for.

Our university academic culture where our students spend several prime, formative years has a major influence on their thinking, learning and their development; as wholesome, responsible professionals and citizens. Like produces like.

*Professor Dr Cheng served at UM from 1 October 1986 till 27 April 2018.*



*“Like produces like.”  
~ Professor Dr Cheng Hwee Ming*



*“Keep patients at the heart of care.”  
~ Professor Dr Christina Tan Phoay Lay*

## **PROFESSOR DR CHRISTINA TAN PHOAY LAY: AN OPEN LETTER FROM A FAMILY PHYSICIAN AND MEDICAL EDUCATIONIST**

**M**y dear Lisa,  
Thank you so much for your email and the update on what you have been doing. It has been great following your career progress since you graduated – how time flies! And now, you have just received an appointment as a lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya. This is wonderful news indeed. Congratulations! I am sure your family are very proud of all your achievements.

You asked for some advice to help you get started in your new position. It must sound quite daunting joining a premier academic institution; and now having “to lecture”, especially when you have not done this before. I recall what it was like when I first started in the university, so I will share with you some of the things I have learned along the way as a doctor and teacher. Perhaps they might be of use.

### **KEEP PATIENTS AT THE HEART OF CARE**

Being a health care professional, we always need to be reminded that patients are central to the care we give and other professional activities. Improving health care is what we all strive for, so patient care must always come first. There is a lot that we can learn from our patients, by looking, listening, interacting with them and involving them in their health care.

Patients who I have looked after over the years, especially long-standing ones in my Family Practice Clinic, have taught me many things that cannot be gained from textbooks; – how to break bad news, how to share good times and bad times, what trust, truthfulness and respect are really about.

### **CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF SHARING AND APPRECIATION**

How often have we shown appreciation in our interactions with our students? How have we replied when they provide an answer to a query that may not match our expectations? We sometimes seem to have a tendency to focus on the more negative aspects in our dealings, especially with our students, this comes across as being critical of what they do (or not do). It is then very easy to progress into a downward spiral of negativity. It would be much more constructive to focus on the positives and this would contribute to a more conducive learning environment for them. Show appreciation of their efforts (“What did you do well?”) and encourage them to go the extra mile (“What can you do better?”).

Being a teacher doesn’t just mean the teaching is a one-way process, but we can also learn a lot from others, including our students. In sharing experiences and knowledge, we not only enhance their education but also enrich ourselves further.

This culture of sharing and appreciation should not just apply to our interactions with students, but could also easily be extended to our peers, other health care professionals; and to include the support staff who often work in the background and provide unwritten support to help us along in our careers.

### **HAVE RESILIENCE AND COPING MECHANISMS**

This goes hand in hand with the previous points on sharing and appreciation. In order to give meaningful feedback to students, it became



*A "housecall" at Deepavali to visit Prof Christina's patients, Mr Velayutham a/l Maruthamuthu and his wife Madam Kamalapathy a/p Kanapathy, pictured here with their son*

apparent that I also had to learn to reflect on my own words and actions, and how I practised as a doctor. As teachers, we need to be more aware of our actions and behaviour and the influence we have on our students. Learning to reflect and give constructive feedback can also help us to cope with the many challenges that come with any job; and also contribute to our developing resilience so that we can go that extra mile and excel in whatever we do.

### **IDENTIFY MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS**

A mentor is a more experienced person or knowledgeable person who helps guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. Its origin lies in ancient Greek mythology, where Mentor was an experienced and trusted adviser and the person who Odysseus placed in charge of his son Telemachus, when Odysseus left for the Trojan War. A role model is a person whose behaviour, example, or success is or can be emulated by others, especially by younger people.

Mentors and role models have been instrumental in shaping my academic career

and professional behaviour. There have been a great number of people who I have had the privilege of engaging with in different corners of the world at various times in my life. Some of them planted the seeds of interest in medical education a long time ago that have germinated and taken firm root. They especially helped me in one way or another on my doctoral journey of discovery, without their guidance and support and understanding, this journey would not have been possible at all.

I wish you all the very best in all your endeavours and in your future career. I have every confidence that you will excel in your contributions to training future generations of health care professionals so that we can provide better health care in our country.

With warmest wishes,  
Christina

*Professor Dr Christina served at UM from 1 March 1995 until 20 Feb 2018.*



## PROFESSOR DR MOHD RAIS MUSTAFA: A TALE OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND PASSIONATE RESEARCH

Professor Mohd. Rais Mustafa was appointed as a lecturer in the Department of Pharmacology at the age of 26 (1987) after completing his PhD from University of Wales, Cardiff, UK. Coming straight into academia without much experience as a tutor or any teaching experience posed a challenging task. "In the first 3 years, I was concentrating more on teaching duties and didn't pay much attention to research," Professor Rais recalled. "As I got more settled into teaching duties, I realised that to further progress in academia one needs to be involved in research and start publishing".

Although there was not much expectation for research in the early years, things gradually changed with the increasing emphasis on research output of the university. During those early years, there were no KPIs and the university was neither pushing nor penalising academic staff for not doing research. Only Vote F (maximum of RM 10,000) was available as research grants back in those days. There were also not many research assistants or postgraduate students to help with research. Likewise, research infrastructure was almost non-existent or outdated, and there were no regular supplies of laboratory animals.

Sharing his early experience as a researcher, Professor Rais advised young academicians that in addition to teaching, they should be mindful of their role as researchers and be prepared to explore and try out new things. They should make themselves versatile and adaptable to the circumstances. One should not wait for everything to be perfect and ready before starting his or her research.

Despite having a PhD in neuropharmacology, Professor Rais started his research by collaborating with natural product chemists to screen plant extracts and phytochemicals for blood pressure lowering and vasorelaxant action. Garnering what he could remember from his undergraduate pharmacology practical classes, Professor Rais began to assemble his version 1.0 of an in vitro isolated tissue organ bath. To enable him to set this into motion, he became a regular customer of the local hardware shop in Jalan Bukit, P.J. His next pit stop was the glass blower in the Chemistry Department who had this incredible skill of crafting organ baths as good as those seen in the catalogues. Soon he expanded his research and began to conduct pharmacological studies on snake and jellyfish toxins. With that, his research interests evolved from being a pharmacologist to a toxicologist!

Professor Rais further advised young academicians to identify a research area of interest and be passionate about it. "It is important to have passion because there are days that would make you wonder if you did make the right choice in getting into academia and doing research." Professor Rais said. "It is very easy to get discouraged, with experiments that would not work, getting papers and grants rejected, and having to juggle your time with other working commitments. Passion is what will get you through your career, not high IQ or political skills".

The next point that Professor Rais wishes to share with the young lecturers is to treasure the academic freedom as much as research is



“Passion is what will get you through your career, not high IQ or political skills.”

*~ Professor Dr Mohd Rais Mustafa*

concerned. That was the reason why he stayed loyal to UM till his retirement. Despite the many constraints and short comings, one enjoys quite a high degree of freedom being in the university. UM did not dictate what research an academician did back then. Researchers are able to set the pace and scope as much as research is concerned and yet keeping a close watch on the expectations from the university. He believes the academic freedom is still there but probably now becoming more regulated to meet the external demands from stakeholders and the global race for university rankings.

One of the growing focuses of research grants are team-based and multidisciplinary collaborations. Professor Rais was fortunate to have been awarded such grants from the Ministry of Science for exploring the healing properties of gamat (sea cucumber) and with several colleagues in the Faculty of Medicine to work on diabetic vasculopathies. Working in a group entails wearing many hats - innovator, creative collaborator, or facilitator. In the course of a research career, one may well fill any of these roles at one time or another.

It is important and possible to develop individual expertise within the centre, and yet still clearly communicate one's expertise. The days of working in silos are slowly fading away; be prepared to work in a team with others. Similarly, pursue collaborations with academic colleagues in industry research labs that might be mutually beneficial. Industry collaborations

are also a great way to have impact beyond just papers and citations.

Aside from research, teaching including student supervision, mentoring and "management and organisational tasks" are mandatory academic commitments. "Teaching may take a lot of time, especially the first few times you do it. However, teaching is also important and a necessary part of your job." Professor Rais said "Remember that the university exists because of the students! So, an academician should plan his or her time efficiently and set aside distinct blocks of time in the week to accomplish all these academic roles. Do not exceed those pre-allocated blocks of time so that you can also make progress on your many other responsibilities."

As final words of advice, Professor Rais reminded aspiring academicians to keep sight of why one chooses to be an academician, in spite of all the obstacles faced in the job. "Let that commitment guide you even when it feels like you are drowning. Do that and In-sha Allah (God willing), you will be fine," said Professor Rais.

These were the words of wisdom from Professor Rais, our retired professor in pharmacology who is also a great role model for the many young academicians in the faculty and beyond.

*Professor Dr Rais served at UM from 6 October 1983 until 30 April 2018.*

## PROFESSOR DR SIM SI MUI: REFLECTION ON MY ACADEMIC JOURNEY

It all began as a young lecturer in the Department of Pharmacology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya in 1984; after obtaining my Ph.D. in Pharmacology from the University of Liverpool, United Kingdom. Although obviously excited at having secured an academic post at the country's oldest premiere university, I soon realized the challenges ahead were great, both in terms of teaching and research.

Having been trained as a pure pharmacologist, teaching healthcare professional courses took a fair amount of adaptation. Many of the drugs I learned in my undergraduate days were more experimental-tool drugs, important for research purpose but often had little or no clinical application. My first great challenge therefore was to understand the medical/dental lingo and what aspects of drug usage were relevant in their respective healthcare practices; and how the teaching of Pharmacology should be integrated with that of other para-clinical disciplines.

Having adjusted to the western way of more independent self-directed learning for the previous 8-9 years in the United Kingdom, it came as a reverse cultural shock when encountering how Malaysian students learned. I realised that I had to take tutorials almost every week for both medical and dental students. Furthermore, extra tuition in the form of "*kelas bimbingan khas*" was prepared for those who failed their term tests. As to practical sessions, instead of students having hands-on themselves, the lecturers often demonstrated the experimental procedures and then explained the results to them. Of course, I realised later that this was in part also

due to a difference in the learning outcomes expected between the graduates of basic science and healthcare professional courses. Nevertheless, there was still some element of "spoon-feeding" students, with frequent tests and rewards (in terms of marks) to entice learning.

On hindsight, this initial job expectation on teaching turned out to be a blessing in disguise to a young inexperienced lecturer like me. It forced me to study the subject to even greater depth in order to be able to explain key pharmacological concepts clearly to the students. I soon realised that with this didactic teaching method, I, the teacher, benefited much more than the students; because I was the one actively digesting the subject material. The majority of students were however merely passively ingesting it; some even swallowing the content without chewing. Thus began my quest to improve teaching and research into medical education.

To this end, I was extremely grateful to the University's provision for lecturers to attend short training courses for career development. I made full use of the university-sponsored "*cuti berkursus*" to upgrade my skills in both teaching and research through short training courses, both in-campus and off-campus and even overseas. From being a sage on the stage, I became a guide at the side to facilitate students' learning. I hence developed an intense interest in problem-based learning (PBL).

Besides teaching, there were also challenges on the research front. Having a basic science background with expertise in the field of pharmacokinetics, the prospect of doing lab-based analytical drug research in this



“The university should help to develop responsible human beings and not merely producing marketable human capital.”

~ Professor Dr Sim Si Mui

department was almost zero 34 years ago; there was not a single HPLC system or similar analytical instrument. Almost all the available research facilities were of the classical Pharmacology (tissue/organ baths and whole animal models) type. University research grants were often limited to less than RM 20,000, which could hardly buy a decent piece of lab equipment.

There was also difficulty obtaining postgraduate students, as we did not offer science degree courses at the Faculty of Medicine in the early 80's. Furthermore, teaching demand was high, because we had to handle undergraduate medical (MBBS) and dental (BDS) degree courses, besides helping to teach the university hospital's diploma courses in nursing (SRN) and medical laboratory technology (MLT).

I was told right from the beginning of my academic career that teaching was to be my priority, for this was the main business of a university! My scientific research would obviously have to play second fiddle. So instead of conducting laboratory experiments, I started research in medical education, experimenting with different teaching-learning innovations at minimal funding cost.

It was not until much later (in the 90's), with increased government funding on R&D and the commencement of Pharmacy and Biomedical Science courses, that I began to resume active science-based research. I also learned to diversify my area of research from analytical pharmacology, to include classical

pharmacology and even venom pharmacology. This I did through inter-departmental collaboration, principally with academic staff from the Departments of Anaesthesiology and Biochemistry (now known as Molecular Medicine).

In all the above challenges, I learned to be flexible with the use of my knowledge/skills and adaptable with regards to the needs of the time or the resources available. The goal I thus set for my academic career was – to inspire a desire to learn, to impress key learning concepts, to imprint effective thinking, and to instill ethical work-practices among our graduates. Our university graduates should first and foremost be a THINKER before becoming a worker.

My feedback to the University as one who has given 34 years of my prime time of life in educating future health care leaders is – NOT to neglect or overlook teaching achievements of lecturers, while maintaining a healthy research environment. The university should help to develop responsible human beings and not merely producing marketable human capital.

This is what I think of PULSE:

- P**-passionate teacher,
- U**-uncompromised researcher,
- L**-lifelong learner,
- S**-sustainable leader, and
- E**-effective team player.

*Professor Sim served at UM from 15 October 1984 until 19 May 2018.*

## **PROFESSOR DR JAMUNARANI A/P S VADIVELU:** RENOWNED MICROBIOLOGIST AND MEDICAL EDUCATIONIST

I graduated with a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom (UK) and worked as a postdoctoral research fellow in the University of Maryland, United States. I chose to serve my country and began as a lecturer in the Department of Medical Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya (UM) in March 1989.

Starting as a young academician in UM, I faced coping with the challenge of both the teaching and research in early academia. When I first joined UM, I only knew what lecturing was, but not teaching; and I had neither been taught how to teach. I would say that the learning process of the local students was much different from where I was trained. In the UK, I was receiving lectures all the time and expected to learn independently and search for knowledge. Due to different educational cultures, I can understand that the drastic shift and change in the learning paradigm for school leavers entering University is difficult for the local students to cope with. They thus want us to teach them instead of getting directions to learn further.

In the past, the medical curriculum was non-integrated and it was difficult for the student to integrate basic sciences with clinical sciences. In order to obtain the skills for teaching in a medical programme, I applied and was selected to join a prestigious 2-year fellowship programme offered by the Foundation of Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) under the auspices of ECFMG, USA. The

program enabled me to learn about leadership skills and medical education. With the skills and knowledge learnt, I was able to initiate various activities in the development and implementation of medical education through MERDU, a unit for medical education, research and development.

It was a tough ride but with full support from the Dean, Professor Dato' Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, we initiated the reformation by introducing a new integrated curriculum. It has subsequently developed into the organised and structured University of Malaya Medical Programme (UMMP) that we have today. The current curriculum provides optimal integration to fill the gaps between basic and clinical sciences. As the head of MERDU since 2012, I always believe that a good curriculum combined with committed academic staff can enhance the learning and teaching experience for learners and teachers. We took this opportunity to write a book on the various processes in medical education, to help new lecturers in their early academic career.

Coming from a basic science background, on my return to Malaysia I started working on melioidosis. We organised the first research meeting on melioidosis and it has now grown to an annual international meeting, where the research fraternity in melioidosis has grown significantly. My research interest grew and I worked on many areas, collaborating with clinical colleagues. I subsequently undertook a Master's in Computational Genetics and Bioinformatics at Imperial College, London in 2002. With the introduction of High Impact



“If one route fails, there are nine other routes available. The only determining factor is that we must have the energy and resilience to follow it through come what may.”

~ *Professor Dr Jamunarani A/P S Vadivelu*



Research (HIR) Grants, I headed a research group on *Helicobacter pylori*, together with Professor Dr Goh Khean Lee. We worked in collaboration with Australian Nobel Laureate, Professor Barry Marshall. International collaborations were established amongst researchers in the USA, France, Japan and India. This collaboration has resulted in approximately 120 paper publications and contributed significantly to the scientific achievement of the Faculty of Medicine.

Today, following retirement I continue to work with a keen interest in both medical education and microbiological research. My aim is to contribute as much as I can to the University and society. Over three decades facing various challenges, it does not stop me from moving forward to help and nurture the young scientists/academicians.

The many challenges faced are mainly in the university bureaucracy. It must be realised that the administration must work together with the academicians, understanding the needs of the academicians while putting something in place. To produce innovative individuals, one needs to have a creative mind that has the breadth to think and develop. Often the role of academia to produce such persons has greatly been dampened by unsuitable management

systems and practices that have been put in place by the Public Services Commission.

Again, trained as a scientist, I never say there is no solution for everything. As the saying goes, "If one route fails, there are nine other routes available", the only determining factor is that we must have the energy and resilience to follow it through come what may. I am a disciplinarian and am known as someone who does not take flack. Staff often find it difficult to work with me, because I expect discipline and delivery on time; if not earlier because I walk the talk. There is no shortcut in life!

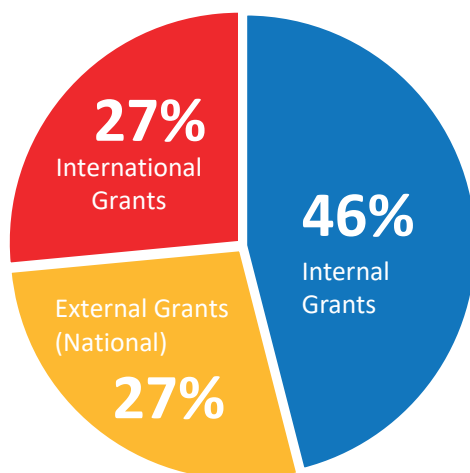
To my younger colleagues who are not interested in academia, I would want them to question themselves as to why they joined academia. My advice is not to take up space just for the sake of being in a university. Your time here is for you to teach, learn to collaborate and innovate. To the University, you are here to administer the business of academia, thus academics. We have to walk hand in hand to put things in place; and you need to be our voice to our paymasters, to be open-minded, more flexible and try to initiate favourable changes over time.

*Professor Jamunarani served at UM from 6 March 1989 till 2 November 2018.*

# FOM: YEAR IN REVIEW

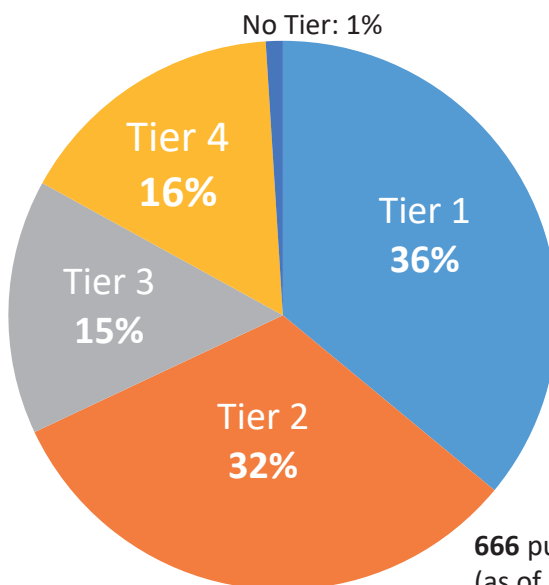
FACULTY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2018: GRANTS AWARDED, PUBLICATIONS

## RESEARCH FUNDING IN FACULTY OF MEDICINE, 2018



Internal Grants	: RM 1,946,908.00
External Grants (National)	: RM 1,160,784.07
International Grants	: RM 1,119,400.03
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED</b>	<b>: RM4,227,092.10</b>

## ISI PUBLICATIONS FROM FACULTY OF MEDICINE, 2018



**666** publications  
(as of 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019)

# WHAT'S ON

**eHEALTH RESEARCH CARNIVAL 2018: 8TH TO 12TH OCTOBER**



**PROFESSOR DR NG CHIRK JENN  
DR TEO CHIN HAI  
DR WOO WING JUN**  
DEPT OF PRIMARY CARE MEDICINE

The University of Malaya eHealth Initiative (UMeHI) and Research Management Unit (RMU) Faculty of Medicine successfully co-organised the annual Faculty of Medicine (FOM) research week from 8-12 October 2018. With the aim of making research more fun and accessible, the event was rebranded to the 'eHealth Research Carnival'.

The objectives of the eHealth Research Carnival were to:

- improve eHealth awareness among UM

staff, students and patients

- foster eHealth research collaboration within and across disciplines
- build researchers' capacity in eHealth.

The eHealth Research Carnival also included a Public Forum to engage the public and patients in research. Five speakers from the FOM spoke on various ways to use technology such as websites and apps, to access evidence-based health information.

## **WHY eHEALTH?**

eHealth is an emerging and game-changing field in health care. The term 'eHealth' often refers to the organization and delivery of health

what's on

services and information using the internet and related technologies. In a broader sense, the term characterizes not only a technical development, but also a new way of working, a change in attitude and a commitment; for networking, global thinking, striving to improve health care locally, regionally and worldwide by using information and communication technology (ICT). The World Health Assembly in 2018 acknowledged the potential major role eHealth can play in improving public health; and accepted a resolution on digital health. This resolution urges Member States to prioritize the development and greater use of digital technologies in health, as a means of promoting Universal Health Coverage and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020, the Malaysian government aims to implement the eHealth strategy, which incorporates existing ICT systems into one system-wide model to enhance health data management; and support research, development and commercialisation (R&D&C) initiatives. This signifies the importance of e-Health as Malaysia moves into the era of IR4.0.

### **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE eHEALTH RESEARCH CARNIVAL 2018**

During the eHealth Research Carnival, we were honoured to have numerous well-known international and local speakers share their knowledge and experience with the University. The symposia, seminars and workshops were beneficial as shown by the positive feedback from the participants. Associate Professor Adam Dunn from Macquarie University (Australia) and Associate Professor James Pickering from the University of Leeds (United Kingdom) while emphasising the importance

of ICT in health care and education, also highlighted the lack of and need for evidence through high quality research in eHealth.

For the first time, a hackathon was organised to provide a platform for undergraduate students from the FOM and Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FCSIT) to collaborate to develop eHealth innovations; to improve patient care and health delivery. A hackathon is typically an event that provides a platform for computer programmers, designers and content experts to collaborate and work together to develop software that is functional by the end of the event, often within days. At the eHealth Research Carnival, the eHealth Hackathon attracted undergraduate students from the Faculties of Medicine and Computer Science & Information Technology to 'hack' problems faced by healthcare providers and patients. Under the guidance of expert clinical mentors, the teams brainstormed ideas and generated eHealth innovations; to solve problems related to healthcare systems or a particular disease.

There were 34 students involved forming eight teams; each team was led by 1-2 expert mentors. Over the intense 2-day event, the FOM students used their medical knowledge to develop the content of the app, whereas their IT counterparts buried their heads into laptops busy writing code for the apps. The innovations they created ranged from a health app for patients with epilepsy (Epi) to a medication alarm and compliance system (HaCkiT). At the end, HaCkit emerged as the champion of the eHealth Hackathon 2018!

As part of public engagement, the eHealth Research Carnival also organised a public



forum where healthcare experts shared some useful health tips; with topics ranging from 'How to search for reliable health information' to 'Top 10 mobile health apps'. Throughout the Carnival, experts stressed the importance of engaging users in the development of eHealth interventions (user-centred design); this will help researchers and app developers understand users' needs and develop apps that are more likely to be used and change users' behaviours.

Overall, the response has been beyond the organiser's expectation: the post-event survey showed very positive feedback and some symposia and workshops were over-subscribed;

(such as the 'Publish or Perish' symposium and the 'Developing eHealth Interventions (Web/Apps)' workshop). The organizer was hugely encouraged by the overwhelming response and intends to organise more similar eHealth and research workshops in the future.

The Organising Committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge all the speakers, sponsors (Microsoft), lecturers, students and Faculty of Medicine management for supporting this event.

*For more information on the UM eHealth Initiative, please visit: <http://ehealth.dicc.um.edu.my>*

## DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE RESEARCH EXHIBITION: 10TH TO 12TH OCTOBER 2018



### DR JESLINDA PAULINE KERISHNAN DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE

The Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya successfully organised the 1st Department of Medicine Research Exhibition in conjunction with the FOM e-Health Research Carnival 2018. The exhibition was a three-day event, held from 10th to 12th October 2018, at Centerpoint, Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya. The event aimed to provide an opportunity for researchers in the department and the faculty to showcase and share their research with each other and the rest of the university. As the department of medicine expanded over the years, individual subspecialties within internal medicine have increasingly worked in silos, often collaborating with scientists outside

the department, rather than each other. This platform allowed researchers within the department to share ideas and knowledge while stimulating discussion on improving or expanding their research.

The department received an overwhelming participation of 62 posters from various Units in the Department of Medicine and other departments in the Faculty of Medicine. The posters were judged in a two staged process. The first round of judging occurred on the 10th of October 2018. Only early career researchers were allowed to enter this competition. 35 posters were presented and judged by a panel of 8 lecturers from the Department of Medicine. The 8 finalists then entered a second round of judging by Professor Dr Sanjiv Mahadeva from the University of Malaya and Professor Phyto

Kyaw Myint, Professor of Geriatric Medicine at the University of Aberdeen, UK, on the 11th of October 2018.

Dr. Syaman Harry emerged the eventual winner with his poster entitled “A Comparison of the Hepafat-Scan® and Fibroscan® Controlled Attenuation Parameter in the Estimation of Hepatic Steatosis in Patients with Non-Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease Using Histology as the Reference Standard”. Dr. Cheng Shian Feng was the 1st Runner-Up and Sheron Goh Sir Loon the 2nd Runner-up. Certificates were presented to all participants, presenters and the finalist. The award ceremony for the final winners was held during the Department of

Medicine’s Annual Dinner on 24th November 2018 at the Tropicana Golf and Country Resort.

With the organization of this event, the department hopes to foster research collaboration among students and members of the department; and provide opportunities to develop research and presentation skills. The department would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge all the participants, judges, staff and the Faculty of Medicine for supporting the Department of Medicine Research Exhibition 2018 and making it a successful event.



# THROUGH OUR LENS

## ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR CHAN YOKE FUN: ASM "TOP RESEARCH SCIENTISTS MALAYSIA 2018" AWARD WINNER

Associate Professor Dr Chan Yoke Fun, one of the recipients of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia "Top Research Scientists Malaysia (TRSM) Awards 2018" for her work in infectious diseases, has come a long way since her first steps into academia. "Research is never easy, but it was especially challenging for newcomers back when I first started - I was fresh out of my PhD, and I actually had to set up everything for my own lab almost from zero!", she recounts. "Thankfully, times have changed - we actually give fresh PhD graduates training via postdoctoral stints now, so they're not caught out like I was back then."

The TRSM award is not Associate Professor Dr. Chan's first accolade - her list of career accomplishments includes being one of three national fellows for the L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science National Fellowship Program in 2014. This was soon followed by an "International Rising Talent" award at the 17th L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards in 2015; both were for her work on enterovirus and hand-foot-and-mouth disease (HFMD) in children. She cites this award as one of her most notable career moments; "It was a huge help in funding the lab as well!" Her other current work includes research on respiratory syncytial viruses, and the mosquito-borne Chikungunya virus.

Given her contributions in the field of infectious diseases, it's interesting to think that she actually might have not ended up in

academia. Her first destination after receiving her undergraduate degree was in industry; she spent two years working for Sime Darby Berhad on oil palm projects, before returning to do her PhD. She is also distinctly proudly "home grown", having achieved both her Bachelor's in Biomedical Sciences and PhD in Virology here at the University of Malaya (UM). Her love for the field is down to its impact on society, and how there are always more questions waiting to be answered. "New diseases crop up all the time, even the most thoroughly researched diseases will mutate and yield even more questions... you could honestly spend a lifetime trying to find solutions to them. It's never-ending."

Alongside research work, she sits on UM's Biosecurity and Biosafety Committee, and is also the head of the Department of Medical Microbiology, though that isn't the full extent of her duties. She definitely has her work cut out, though she credits the support she receives: "Female researchers here in Asia... we have an advantage compared to our Western counterparts, because of how much closer we usually are with our family units. I've had a lot of help being able to juggle all this - along with raising a family - thanks to my own parents and in-laws. A good support network is a huge help to anyone."

She also credits UM's own Research and Innovation office for their support in identifying suitable opportunities for researchers to pursue. "It can be hard to keep up with all the





“Stay hungry, stay foolish. Never be fully satisfied with what you know; there’s always more out there waiting to be learnt and discovered - as long as you’re willing.”

*~ Associate Professor Chan Yoke Fun*



*Associate Professor Chan at the Academy of Sciences Malaysia awards ceremony.*

possible funding and training opportunities out there with the workload, so if it wasn't for them, I might have missed out."

Associate Professor Dr. Chan has quite a few things she hopes to see from the future of the research culture here in Malaysia. She is passionate about the need for a greater collaborative spirit amongst researchers; to match or rival that of researchers from developed countries: "Even though it does net us publication credits, we can do more than just share samples - we shouldn't be satisfied with just that." Notably, she'd like to see more tangible technology and expertise transfer when collaborating with other scientists, whether locally or internationally. "We should look at 'paying it forward' a lot more."

Improvements in the nationwide grant/funding system and funding terms also appear on her wishlist; specifically improvements that would further support emerging scientists. "Newer researchers often find themselves competing with more established academics in the same large pool, we end up missing out on supporting what the newer generation can offer, so a shift in the grant system would help everyone greatly. It's also harder to support

world-class research with short funding durations of around one to two years."

Challenges aside, there are plenty of rewarding moments for her. "It feels good when your paper gets accepted for publication when it's the first draft...it is also nice for me as a lecturer to see when my students are engaged and hungry to learn more." She has also had the opportunity to attend a Nobel Laureate meeting in Germany and a bio-risk management training programme at Emory University in the United States of America. She holds a Newton Advanced Fellowship that sees her collaborating with St. Andrews University in Scotland. Citing these as some of her other career-defining moments, she makes the case that homegrown researchers here in Malaysia have plenty of potential; and are definitely not lacking in international opportunities or professional standing.

Her take-home message happens to also be a personal favourite of Steve Jobs': "Stay hungry, stay foolish". She advises everyone to never be fully satisfied with what they know, and to never assume that they are the best - "There's always more out there waiting to be learnt and discovered, as long as you're willing."

## PROFESSOR DR ONN HASHIM: ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MALAYSIA FELLOW 2018



*Professor Dr Onn Hashim, FASc being conferred the Fellowship of the Academy of Sciences by the Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. Looking on (middle) is the President of ASM, Professor Datuk Dr Asma Ismail, FASc.*

The Faculty of Medicine rejoiced when Professor Dr Onn Hashim from the Department of Molecular Medicine was recently awarded the Academy of Science Malaysia Fellowship 2018. The ASM Fellowship consists of distinguished scientists, engineers, technologists and social scientists who have made exceptional contributions in their respective fields. Individuals with merit, possessing high integrity, demonstrating utmost decorum at all times and with the essential characteristics of an ambassador of ASM at the national and international level are nominated each year.

“It was an honour to be elected to the Fellowship of the Academy of Sciences, especially when it was conferred by our Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. I am truly grateful to our Dean, Prof. Dato’ Dr. Adeeba Kamarulzaman and Prof. Dr. Jamunarani Vadivelu for their nomination;” said Professor Onn Hashim.

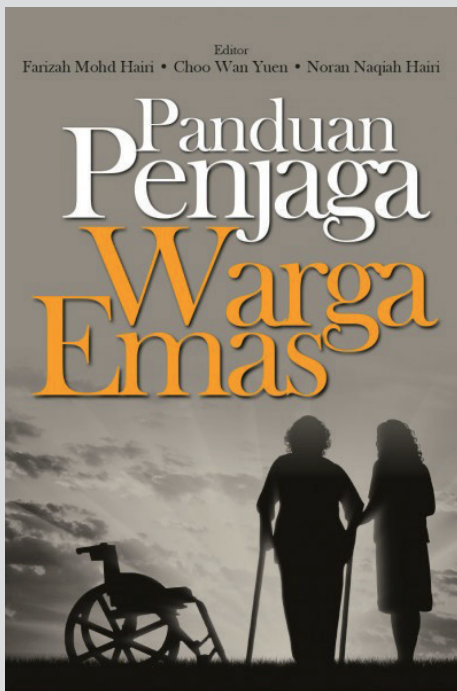
Professor Onn Hashim received his BSc (Hons) from Universiti Malaya in 1984, and PhD from the University of Glasgow, Scotland in 1987. He joined UM in 1988 as an academician and is now a Professor Grade VK5 at the Department of Molecular Medicine.

Professor Onn's research speciality is on lectinology, proteomics and glycoproteins. His research on two different lectins from the seeds of cempedak has been applied in various biomedical studies, including the development of IgA nephropathy and cancer biomarker discovery.

Applying lectins, Professor Onn Hashim has also successfully identified the aberrant serum and urinary glycoproteins in cancer patients. Many of these are promising biomarkers that can be used to improve clinical diagnostics and prognostics. These include serum glycoproteins that can be used to screen for early breast cancer, and urinary peptide fragments that can effectively distinguish patients with benign prostatic hyperplasia from those with prostate cancer.

His vast research findings on proteomics, lectins and cancer biomarkers have been widely published in scientific literature and presented in more than 60 invited lectures, locally and internationally.

Professor Onn also sat on many expert advisory and evaluation committees at national and international levels. He was recipient of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science Research Fellowship (1991), Fulbright Scholar Award (1993), the National Academy Award in the category of Journal Article Publication (2008) and appointed as external examiner of medical and dental biochemistry programmes at 11 different universities. He was also Visiting Professor at Prince of Songkla University in 2016 and 2017.



### **PANDUAN PENJAGA WARGA EMAS**

**Editors:** Faridah Hairi, Choo Wan Yuen, Noran Naqiah Hairi

**Year:** 2018

**Publisher:** UM Press

**ISBN:** 9788674880767

*Panduan Penjaga Warga Emas* is an important reference for Malaysians, especially for the guardians or caregivers of older persons. The efforts of this book have been successfully achieved through support, cooperation and collaboration from various disciplinary staff from the State Health Department, Negeri Sembilan and Seremban District Health Office.

*For the purchase of this book online, visit [www.umpress.com.my](http://www.umpress.com.my)*

“I believe passion and perseverance are the key words to move forward in research at UM. Unlike the top-notch universities abroad, we at UM face many different challenges. Without passion and perseverance, one can easily give up along the way.”

*~Professor Dr Onn Hashim, FASc.*



## DATUK PROFESSOR DR AWANG BULGIBA AWANG MAHMUD: UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA EMINENT SCHOLAR

Last year (2018) was an amazing year for me. It was the year when I received two major awards, both of which were quite frankly unexpected. The first was the Asia-Pacific Academic Consortium for Public Health (APACPH) Excellence in Leadership Medallion in September; and then the “Tokoh Akademik Universiti Malaya” in December. To win a major award in one’s own field is gratifying, as it means that one’s peers have taken notice of one’s contributions. To win two major awards in the same year was really something special.

I don’t really know how to describe my feelings when I received the “Tokoh Akademik Universiti Malaya”. There was certainly astonishment (as I had not applied, but was nominated for the award) and there was joy, but more than anything else, there was a sense of humility. The “Tokoh Akademik Universiti Malaya” is a holistic lifetime achievement award for academicians at UM. When the news broke that I had won, some of my younger colleagues emailed and texted me to say how they look up to me as their role model - an academician, administrator, leader, researcher and someone who contributes to the community. That is a great responsibility which I take very seriously indeed.

What advice then would I have for my younger colleagues? I am no sage, but I am a great believer in positive thinking and so I have always fervently believed in these seven principles:

Firstly, one must take charge of one’s life and not let someone else take charge of it. Being in charge of one’s life means making life-changing decisions with open eyes. Secondly, life is too short to have regrets so there is little point regretting the decisions that one has made with open eyes. Thirdly, one must try to be the best in whatever one wants to do, regardless of the circumstances.

Fourthly, one must always count one’s blessings as there are always others who are worse off and worse off does not always equate being financially less fortunate. Fifth, if one’s dreams do not scare oneself, then those dreams are not big enough. Sixth, one must always keep oneself grounded in reality and not be carried away by all the successes or accolades one might receive. Lastly, one must always look to the future with optimism, as optimism radiates energy and good vibes while pessimism saps the strength of everyone.

The Quran says in Surah Al-An’aam verse 59: “With Him are the keys of the unseen that none knoweth but He” which means the future is always uncertain for us mere mortals. Despite the uncertainties, the optimist in me says the future always looks bright. How bright it will be will depend largely on what light you choose to shine on it.



“Take charge of your own life - not let someone else  
take charge of it.”

*~Datuk Professor Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud*

# AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

PULSE@UM WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE FOLLOWING FROM THE FACULTY:



**Professor Dr Imelda Balchin @ Imelda Nasreen binti Tan Sri Nasruddin:** Awarded the Anugerah Media Advokasi Kesihatan Terbaik Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia

**Professor Dr Sazaly Abu Bakar:** Awarded Malaysia's Research Star Award 2018 for the category of Prominent Topics in Research (Dengue virus, tetravalent Dengue vaccine)

**Associate Professor Dr Azura Mansor:** Ahli Yang Ketiga (Paduka) bagi Darjah Kebesaran Setia Mahkota Kelantan Yang Amat Terbilang (PSK) at the Investiture Ceremony of the DYMM Sultan Kelantan

**Dr Haireen Binti Abdul Hadi:** Received the RCE award for her UMCares Community Engagement Project

**Professor Dr Yvonne Lim:** Featured in Nature

(An international journal of science): "Yvonne Ai Lian Lim: Infection Fighter"

**Associate Professor Dr Tengku Ain Fathlun Binti Tengku Kamalden & Dr Wong Won Fen:** 2018 Fullbright Malaysia Scholar Program

**Professor Dr Ng Kwan Hoong:** Marie Sklodowska-Curie Award 2018

**Dr Sim Joong Hiong:** Association of Commonwealth Universities Fellowship award

**Associate Professor Dr Tengku Ain Fathlun Binti Tengku Kamalden:** Global Ophthalmology Awards Program 2018

**Dr Nurul Atira:** DITA Short-Term Research Scholarship for Medical Education at Duesto University, Spain

**Professor Dr Woo Yin Ling:** PROJECT ROSE - Finalist for the 2018 Union for International





Cancer Control (UICC) Collaborative Award

**Dr Tan Ai Huey:** Interacademy Partnership (IAP) for Health, Young Physician Leaders Programme 2018

**Professor Dr Saw Aik and the Silent Mentor team:** 4th Tan Kah Kee Award for its contribution towards education / public service

**Dr Vishala Sivapalan:** 2nd runner-up winner in the 2018 National Finalist of Famelab Malaysia

**Dr Cindy Teh:** Malaysian Society for Infectious Disease and Chemotherapy (MSIDC) - Institut Mérieux Young Investigator Award 2018

## UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2018

**UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA EMINENT SCHOLAR:** Datuk Professor Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud

**OUTSTANDING RESEARCHER - DISTINGUISHED RESEARCHER:** Professor Dr Hany Ariffin

**CONSULTANCY:** Associate Professor Dr Wan Yusoff Wan Sulaiman

**THE MOST PRODUCTIVE CENTRE OF RESEARCH (COR) EXCEPT HICOE AND POTENTIAL HICOE:** Centre For Natural Products

and Drug Discovery (CENAR); Professor Dr Mohd Rais Mustafa (Head of Centre)

**MANAGEMENT AND PROFESSIONAL (NON ACADEMIC STAFF):** Wan Melissa Diyana Wan Normazlan

**SUPPORT STAFF:** Nurul Irma Iza Zulkaffli

**REWARD FOR UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA STAFF - PHD GRADUATES (4 YEARS OR LESS):** Dr Tan Kae Yi, Dr Jong Wei Loong, Dr Ng Tyng Yan

# UPCOMING EVENTS



## **MARCH 2019**

13-14 March

Introduction to Qualitative Workshop

16-17 March

Hands-on Advanced Statistics using SPSS

19 March

Viva Defense Workshop

27 March

Understanding Statistical Results in  
Clinical Research

## **MAY 2019**

11-12 May

Hands-on Basic Statistics Using SPSS

16 May

Academic Networking Seminar

## **APRIL 2019**

3 April

Scientific Writing Seminar

5 April

Grant Writing Workshop

16 April

Sample Size and Sampling Method Workshop

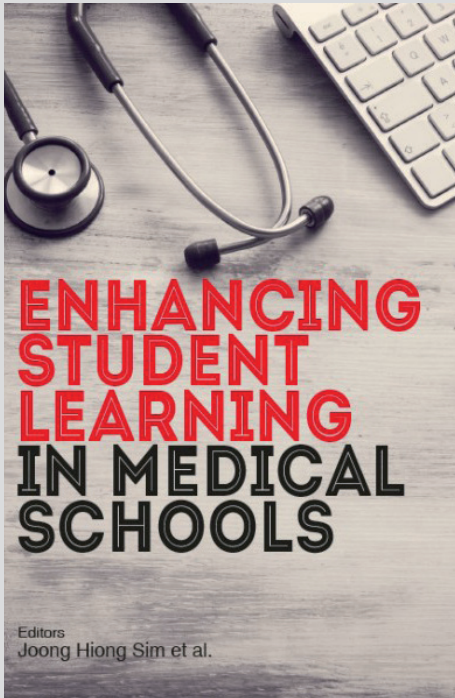
## **JUNE 2019**

15-16 June

Hands-on Intermediate Statistics Using SPSS

26 June

Structural Equation Modelling using Smart-PLS



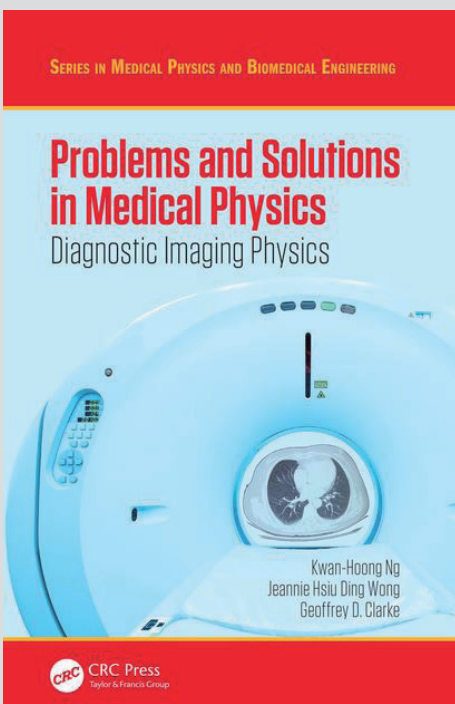
## ENHANCING STUDENT LEARNING IN MEDICAL SCHOOLS

Editors: Sim JH, Foong CC, Hong WH, Pallath V, Jamuna Vadivelu

Year: 2018

Publisher: UM Press

To advance knowledge and learning through education is a fundamental responsibility of any educational institution and so is the core function of an educator. To perform this function, a teacher needs to enhance student learning through different settings and opportunities. This book is about enhancing student learning within the setting of a medical school. Each of the sixteen chapters of the book focuses on one aspect or area related to enhancing student learning.



## PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS IN MEDICAL PHYSICS: DIAGNOSTIC IMAGING PHYSICS

Editors: Ng Kwan Hoong, Jeannie Hsiu Ping Wong, Geoffrey D Clarke

Year: 2018

Publisher: CRC Press

ISBN: 9781482239959

*The first in a three-volume set exploring Problems and Solutions in Medical Physics, this volume explores common questions and their solutions in Diagnostic Imaging. It contains key imaging modalities, exploring X-ray, mammography, and fluoroscopy, in addition to computed tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, and ultrasonography. Each chapter provides examples, notes, and references for further reading to enhance understanding.*



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