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USM RESEARCH ENTRIES IN HIGH-IMPACT JOURNALS STAMP THEIR MARK ON THE WORLD STAGE



USM, PENANG, 20 April 2016 – The Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman was delighted with the achievements of two USM academicians in publishing their research outcomes in two high-impact factor journals, namely Lancet Journal and Nature Genetics Journal recently.

"We are proud of their achievements and would continue to motivate other USM researchers and academicians to strive for similar achievements," said Omar.

He added that, this is an important achievement in increasing collaboration efforts among the lecturers, academicians and local researchers, to have a greater involvement in major researches in various disciplines of knowledge at the international level.

"USM continually supports and encourages cooperation and collaboration of such nature, moreover when it would contribute to a high impact on the academic standing of the university as well as in being a contribution to society and the country in areas of study where we have a strong standing," added Omar.

The two researchers had achieved such high standards in bringing fame to the name of the university. They are from the USM School of Medical Sciences at the USM Health Campus. Associate Professor Dr. Kamarul Imran Musa is attached to the Department of Community Medicine while Professor Dr. Liza Sharmini Ahmad Tajudin is from the Department of Ophthalmology.

Dr. Kamarul Imran Musa published his research outcomes in the Lancet Journal (Impact Factor/IF: 45.217) while Dr. Liza Sharmini's research outcomes could be found in the Nature Genetics Journal (Impact Factor/IF: 29.35) with two other co-authors from the USM Glaucoma Research team.

In explaining this, the Dean, School of Medical Sciences, Professor Dr. Ahmad Sukari Halim said that, both researchers have been collaborating with various international partners in matters relating to global health-care and well-being, which would also have an impact on the Malaysian population.

"In his research work on NCD Risk Factor Collaboration (NCD-RisC), Dr. Kamarul Imran worked together with Professor Dr. Majid Ezzati, from the WHO Collaborating Centre on NCD Surveillance and Epidemiology, Imperial College London. Other partners involved in the research include those from the Ministry of Health, Universiti Putra Malaysia, University of Malaya and Universiti Teknologi MARA.

"Their research looked at the increasing incidences of obesity around the world. The world now has more overweight than underweight people, numbering 640 million, based on their body mass index (BMI). In 2014, more than one in ten men and one in seven women are obese. By 2025, more men (18%) and women (21%) would be obese globally if such situations are left unchecked and the relevant policies failed to be implemented. This could indefinitely lead to an epidemic of severe obesity," he elaborated.

Ahmad Sukari added that Dr Kamarul Imran's role in the research was as the statistician, and also in reanalysing data, providing results and in the preparing of manuscripts.

Dr Liza Sharmini on the other hand, was involved in research collaboration with Professor Dr Aung Tin, a University College London (UCL) alumnus. The research looked at the genetics of Primary Angle Closure Glaucoma (PACG) adopting genome-wide association study (GWAS), with research grants from USM Research University (USM-RUI) on issues relating to glaucoma.

Other partners involved in the research include those from the Ministry of Health, University of Malaya and the International Eye Specialist Centre. Dr Aung Tin is also involved in the Singapore Malay Eye Study (SiMES), which had collected 3500 DNA samples of Malay origin.

He said further, the research looked at samples of diseased patients to further understand the problem of PACG, which is a major cause of blindness worldwide, and possibly look into the development of new drugs which are more genetically compatible.

"The research is supported by 2 USM-RUI grants, and done together with Singapore Eye Research Institute (SERI) as the main institution, with a USD 5 million to be completed within five years, having the purview of the Singapore Ministry of Health National Medical Research Council under Translational and Clinical Research, STaR investigator Research Award and A-STAR.

Other institutions involved in this major research include Beijing Institute of Ophthalmology, Centre for Vision Research, Sydney and Institute of Ophthalmology, UCL, UK as well as institutions from 24 other countries," said Ahmad Sukari.

A total of 1 PhD student, 3 MSc students (by research) and 6 MMed students were involved in this project.

Both researchers had undergone the Academic Staff Higher Learning Programme (RPTKA) in pursuing their higher studies. Dr Kamarul Imran, with a background in Medical Statistics, did his studies at Lancaster University, whereas Liza Sharmini, whose expertise is in ophthalmology, completed her Ph.D at University College London (UCL).

Such researches are hoped to produce more solutions to health problems in society. At the same time, more publications in these high impact journals would be expected through such collaborative efforts, supported by the USM RPTKA scheme and research funding, especially in assisting the USM School of Medical Sciences to nurture more world-class research teams and to soar higher in the future.

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