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USM LECTURER RECEIVES L'OREAL-UNESCO FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH GRANT WORTH RM30,000 FOR CANCER RESEARCH

PENANG, 9 October 2015 - Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) further strengthened its standing as a Research University when one of its lecturers received the L'oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science National Fellowship research grant worth RM30,000.

According to the recipient, a lecturer from the Institute for Research in Molecular Medicine (INFORMM), Dr. Oon Chern Ein, the grant will allow her and her team to further their research in the field of oncology and to excel in it.

"My team discovered a compound that could inhibit Sirtuin activities in cancer cells. Sirtuins are enzymes implicated in neurodegenerative, metabolic diseases and cancer, where in some cancer types, sirtuins are up-regulated, thus contribute to tumour progression and we tested the compound on colon cancer cells, leukaemia and breast cancer cells."

"We started this project at the end of 2013 with a team comprising of pharmacists and chemists that worked together to develop this compound and extend its applications in cancer," she said.

Oon added, its effect on cancer cells is enhanced with chemotherapy treatment, hence it helps to sensitise the chemotherapy treatment.

"All projects have been carried out on cell lines so far thus the next step is to study the toxicity and its effect on cancer in mice because this compound needs to be further validated with intense fundamental research in animals followed by clinical trials," she explained.

Oon also would like to extend collaboration with Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Singapore in the near future for this research and advised all young researchers to believe in themselves and the research project, no idea is ridiculous, be brave and take some risks to come up with new ideas.

Oon completed her degree in Biotechnology with First Class Honours at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in 2006 before pursuing her DPhil in Medical Oncology in the University of Oxford under the ASTS Fellowship scheme.

Besides Oon, two other recipients who received the grants were from Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).

L'Oreal-UNESCO for Women in Science National Fellowship is the third pillar programme developed by L'Oréal subsidiaries with the support of the National Commissions for UNESCO to help young researchers to pursue their scientific careers in their home country; in Malaysia, the programme rewards 3 Fellows annually, with each Fellow receiving RM30,000.

Since the programme was founded in 1998, more than 2,000 women in over 100 countries have been recognised for their research and received funding to further their careers.

Also present at the event held at Le Meridien Hotel Kuala Lumpur were the Education Minister Dato' Seri Mahdzir Khalid and USM Vice-Chancellor Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman.

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