



# SMiLeS

*Newsletter of the School of Medical and Life Sciences*



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### Disclaimer

Every effort is made to provide accurate and complete information. However, this newsletter cannot guarantee that there will be no errors.

### For comments, suggestions or ideas, please contact:

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## A New Beginning

The year 2021 brings forth a new school at Sunway University – the School of Medical and Life Sciences (SMLS). It combines the former School of Health and Medical Sciences (SHMS) with two departments and two research centres from the former School of Science and Technology (now renamed School of Engineering and Technology).

The school is led by the Dean, Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam, who is supported by three Associate Deans: Dr Chew Jacty (Teaching and Learning), Prof Goplasamy Reuben Clements (Research) and Prof Alvin Ng Lai Oon (International).

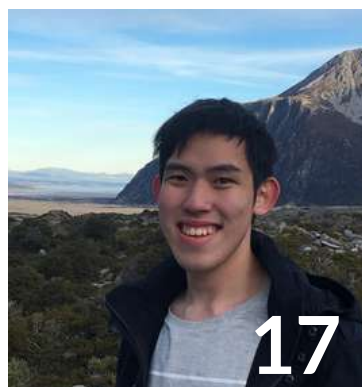
Prof Abhi affirmed, **“The establishment of the School of Medical and Life Sciences is Sunway University's commitment towards producing outstanding research and teaching that increase our understanding of the nature of life, drive equitable and optimal health outcomes, and nurture future leaders who will guide us to a healthier and more humane world.”** Join us as we embark on a journey towards greater heights in medical and life sciences for the benefit of our society!



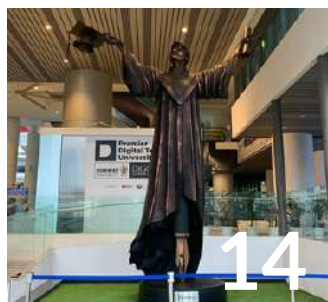
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Seeing my students work as a team (an essential life skill) in managing the whole project successfully is very encouraging.

Dr Michelle Lee,  
Senior Lecturer  
Department of Psychology



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## Welcome to the inaugural **SMiLeS** newsletter!

The idea of this newsletter is to share news of achievements, events, people, ideas or any other newsworthy information for the consumption of the School, University and beyond. As a new school, we have much to develop in being relevant to the community through research, academic programmes and professional consultations. Let's use this platform to share information about what we are about in hope that we widen our networks for building relationships for potential collaborations and much more.

My portfolio as Associate Dean (Engagement and Internationalisation) involves branding our School towards achieving world class status of Sunway University.

To me, external branding is not complete without internal branding. So, I hope this newsletter can be part of internal branding to bring us closer as a School and as a University. I wish for us to be more familiar with what each other are about so that we can all be aligned in our knowledge and understanding of our strengths and uniqueness to push us forward as a School.

I would like to thank our Dean, Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam and the School management for their blessings in starting this newsletter. I'm grateful for the support from SMLS members for their contributions. A special shout out to Sub-Editor, Kelsey Savage for her hard work in designing and compiling the **SMiLeS** Newsletter! Looking forward to more happy stories of successes and joy within **SMiLeS**!

Prof Alvin Ng  
Editor



Kelsey Savage  
BSc (Hons) Psychology student  
Special Projects Intern, Office of the Associate Dean  
(Engagement and Internationalisation),  
School of Medical and Life Sciences  
Sunway University



Introducing Kelsey Savage:

Hi! I'm Kelsey. I'm a final year student currently doing my internship here at Sunway University. Over the years, I have developed a keen interest in human behaviour, curious to know what makes them tick. I'm also really passionate about art, so I spend most of my free time painting and designing, expressing myself through mediums other than words. Being given the opportunity to design the **SMiLeS** newsletter is truly an honour and I loved every part of it. I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter!!

# From the Dean's Desk



It gives me great pleasure in writing this message to celebrate this inaugural edition of **SMiLeS**, the official newsletter of the Sunway University School of Medical and Life Sciences. Thank you to everyone for the amazing support that all of you have given to my Deanship and the newly reconfigured school. Special thanks to the Sunway Education Group CEO, Prof. Dr. Elizabeth Lee, Sunway University President and School Advisor, Prof. Dr. Sibrandes Poppema and Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Graeme Wilkinson for your leadership and steadfast support and guidance.

Congratulations, Alvin and team for making this newsletter a reality. The newsletter serves as a perfect platform to showcase and archive the amazing individual and collective achievements of our dear students and staff as well as a snapshot of the latest developments within the school. I really hope that it will also serve to better engage with our beloved alumni and external stakeholders. Please don't be shy to share your personal and professional stories. If anything, the pandemic has thought us the importance of building personal connections, celebrating the human spirit and putting a smile on someone's face.

“

*Every time you smile at someone, it is an  
action of love, a gift to that person,  
a beautiful thing.*

- Mother Teresa -

# SMiLeS

But **SMiLeS** is more than a clichéd expression of hope and positivity. It embodies the vision of Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Jeffrey Cheah, Foundation Chancellor of Sunway University for the school to become a leading provider of healthcare and life sciences education with a dedicated pursuit of research and service excellence. The “**i**” represents the School’s commitment to 1) be immersive in driving **innovations**, 2) uphold the highest standards of **integrity**, and 3) promote a greater culture of **inclusivity** in every aspect of our governance, operations, services and ultimately - IMPACT. The “**e**” represents the School’s pledge of **EXCELLENCE** in 1) promoting the **entrepreneurial** spirit, 2) championing **empathy** and compassion, and 3) providing quality **education** for all.

The next few years is going to be an exciting journey as the School continues to expand its portfolio and network. As we consolidate our partnerships with the various world-class institutions around the world, I look forward to forging new partnerships, both local and regional. There is a famous adage in the Malay language, “Melentur buluh, biarlah dari rebungnya” (Direct translation: to bend/shape a bamboo, one should start when it’s still a shoot) that reminds us of the importance of getting our fundamentals right, investing in a new generation of leaders and ideas, and striking when the iron is hot. I warmly welcome ideas, suggestions and active participation of everyone in shaping the School’s trajectory and future-proofing our society in a (hopefully sooner rather than later) post-COVID-19 world.

**Prof Abhimanyu Veerakumarasivam**

Dean, School of Medical and Life Sciences

# Associate Dean R E P O R T S



Dear SMLS colleagues and students,

2021 has quite an exciting start with the shift from RMCO to MCO in January which is still on-going. At SMLS, we are expecting a number of changes in the coming months.

The school is currently working on revising programme structures (Department of Nursing is exempted) for the Sunway University Curriculum Framework, which will be implemented in January 2023. The focus of this new framework is to provide more flexibility and freedom to our fellow academics to develop programmes. At the same time, this framework ensures that students are intellectually challenged and afforded ample opportunities to hone the attributes that we expect out of Sunway graduates.

Another change we expect in January 2023 is the introduction of the “Block Mode” Calendar to replace the current “Semester” Calendar. This new “block mode” delivery will offer flexibility to learning and facilitate student exchange programmes, while accommodating the new curriculum framework.

As part of my portfolio involves assisting in Quality Assurance, I have also been tasked to assist Heads of Department in MQA audits of the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly, Diploma in Nursing, BSc (Hons) Psychology and BSc (Hons) Biomedicine. This process is vital to help enhance and improve existing programmes, and teaching and learning approaches. Thank you to all my colleagues who helped me make this process a smooth and efficient one!

Student engagement and satisfaction is very important to us. As a start, we recently conducted a survey to understand the online learning experiences and satisfaction levels of undergraduates in the Department of Biological Sciences. An anonymous and self-administered online questionnaire containing both Likert scale and open-ended questions was developed and circulated. Overall, the respondents were satisfied with their online learning experience and scored the academic department highly in terms of helpfulness in supporting their online learning journey (scale 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest satisfaction level). Despite the respondents having generally expressed their satisfaction regarding their online learning experience, certain areas such as the impact of online classes on students’ motivation for their learning warrants further investigation. Nevertheless, the survey provides a benchmark to assess the efficacy of various interventional strategies planned by the academic department in the future. We recognise the usefulness of such surveys and we aim to conduct school wide surveys as part of our commitment to provide the best education to our students.

Once again, thank you all for your support and patience with our efforts to improve the educational aspects of our school’s programmes and I look forward to working you in the next quarter.

**Dr Jactty Chew**

Associate Dean (Education)



# Associate Dean REPORTS

Research & Postgraduate Studies

Dear fellow researchers in SMLS! It has been enjoyable experience getting to know more about the exciting research being conducted in this school, including the names of viruses and bacteria – stuff that's really out of my comfort zone!

Under my portfolio, I have been trying to foster a more active research culture, which includes establishing greater collaborations within the school and with other schools in the University. One of the first activities required development of priority research areas with the help of the Heads of Departments and Centres – this was crucial in the development of PhD studentship ideas for the University. We now have 5 priority research areas led by your following colleagues:



- 1) Healthy ageing (AP Dr Yong Min Hooi)
- 2) Non-communicable diseases (AP Dr Audrey Lim)
- 3) Communicable diseases (Prof Poh Chit Laa)
- 4) Eco-health (Prof Reuben Clements)
- 5) Organisational health (AP Dr Lin Mei-Hua)

If you would like to propose more specific research topics that may be offered as PhD studentships, please contact the leads.

Research cannot proceed without sufficient funding, but I understand this is especially hard to come by during the pandemic. When relevant, I have shared possible funding opportunities, but I am thrilled to know that all of us have been trying their best to secure grants from MOHE (e.g. 11 applicants are applying for almost RM2 million worth of funds from FRGS) and almost all of us have been awarded invaluable seed funding from our university (e.g. Individual Research Grant and Kick-start grant). Research Services have also helped offer training in FRGS writing and reviewing skills with the help of Prof Abhi and AP Dr Yong Min Hooi – these have definitely improved the quality of our proposals and have made them more competitive. Of course, we need to aim to secure more external grants to support our research and I will try my best to assist in finding them. And if you have any research grants that you would like to share with other colleagues, please contact me to share them. Research is a team effort – and this includes fund-raising!

Under my portfolio, I am also assisting the Dean to ensure that appropriate strategies and policies are in place to enable the School to meet its research targets. As such, we have developed KPIs for all academics and expect at least 119 research outputs. It is only the first quarter, I am proud to announce that we are on track to meet the school's target. Well done everyone!

# NEWS

Post-graduate (PG) students are the life blood of our well-oiled research machine and I have been delighted to meet many sharp and talented individuals over the last 3 months. In order to improve the transparency in which PG scholarships are awarded, we have introduced a PG scholarship/studentship evaluation committee to recommend deserving students to the university – we feel that this new process will introduce more stringency to help the school find the most passionate and dedicated students from Malaysia and around the world to keep fuelling our lofty research ambitions

Finally, I have been trying to promote research links and engagement within the School, across the University and with external organisations. Over the last months, I have been meeting several of you one-on-one to find out more about your research aspirations and needs – this has really helped me match potential collaborators and discover new grants that your colleagues could apply for. One of the most exciting opportunities for collaborations is with Sunway FutureX farms. By now, I hope you would have seen the short video report that gives you an idea of what the farm looks like and highlighted the potential for research/teaching collaborations. In case you missed it, [here](#) is the video clip.

It's been a fulfilling first quarter in 2021 and I'm looking forward to assisting you in our research endeavours in the coming months. I sincerely hope that there will be more cross-pollinations of research ideas among our colleagues and I am certain that these collaborations are the first step in ensuring our research has an impact in not just academia, but more importantly, on our society in these challenging times. Stay safe!

**Prof Gopalasamy Reuben Clements**

Associate Dean (Research and Postgraduate Studies)

# Associate Dean REPORTS

Engagement &  
Internationalisation

Dear **SMiLeS**,

As Associate Dean (Engagement and Internationalisation), my role covers the development of the school's and the university's engagement and internationalization strategies in the following areas:

- Internationalisation of the curriculum and development of global learning initiatives
- Industrial engagement and entrepreneurial activities
- Development of global partnerships and linkages
- Student and staff global mobility options
- Promoting and publicizing school activities, initiatives and achievements internally and externally

While there have been meetings with potential global partners since the start of 2021, the focus of what SMLS need to develop is our website contents and our quarterly newsletter as a record of our significant activities and events for better publicity and exposure as part of our internal and external engagement. The website updates are being carried out gradually, with the help of Wan Nooraliza and her administrative team. Feel free to check the website for inaccuracies and report them to us so that we can make the necessary amendments. It is very important for us to have an accurate and informative website to attract more potential students, research interest and industrial partners.

In mid-March 2021, I attended the Asia-Pacific Association of International Education (APAIE) 2021 event, a 2-day conference with updates from Asia Pacific countries on their internationalization initiatives and statuses. It was an eye-opening event in that participants got to interact with leaders in international education to discuss shared issues and their possible solutions. I met many liaison persons for academic mobility. Many institutions now have subjects that can be taken as credits by their partners universities where there is lacking expertise. This is something we can explore with our respective connections in other universities. Let me know if you'd like to pursue partnership with other universities to tap into their teaching resources. I'll be happy to facilitate the engagement for credit transfer.

# SMIS

I also attended an event by the British Council on “Perspectives on International Collaboration: The Role of Industry Engagement in UK and Malaysia Higher Education Collaboration”. It involved discussions by UK and Malaysian academic leaders pertaining to the adaptation of academia to industrial developments. The main point was that there is lack of awareness by industries in Malaysia on the relevance of universities with regard to research and development that can benefit them. As such there is a critical need for academia to better engage the industry for mutual benefits in research and development, i.e. we get funding, they get development. One way of doing this is to go through Sunway R&D (see article: [Doubling Manufacturing Capacity With The Right Digital Initiatives | Business Today](#) ). However, we also need to engage with industries ourselves. So please let me know if there are any particular organization or institution that you’d like to work with on research and I’ll see how I can facilitate engagement with them.

Lastly, we have batches of students graduating this May (or June). Some of these students may have plans to further their studies overseas but may not know how to go about finding courses and universities, or to begin their application processes. I can help put them in touch with our local agents who cover international universities and can provide comprehensive services up to the students’ departure (physically or online). So please let me know if you know of graduating students who need help in postgraduate studies overseas. Thank you!

**Prof Alvin Ng Lai Oon**

Associate Dean (Engagement and Internationalisation)

# Meet The Team

The School of Medical and Life Sciences is composed of five departments and three research centres:

Prof. Abhi Veerakumarasivam



**HOD, Department of Allied Health**

Prof Datin Dr Chia Yook Chin



**HOD, Department of Medical Sciences**

Assoc Prof Dr Lin Mei-Hua



**HOD, Department of Psychology**

Assoc Prof Dr Tommy Tong Yuh Koon



**HOD, Department of Biological Sciences**

Prof Dr Khatijah Lim Abdullah



**HOD, Department of Nursing**

Assoc Prof Dr Yong Min Hooi



**Head, Ageing Health and Well-being Research Centre**

Prof Dr Poh Chit Laa



**Head, Centre for Vaccine and Virus Research**

Prof Edward R.T. Tiekink



**Head, Research Centre for Crystalline Materials**

## SMLS Administrative Team



The administration of the school is headed by School Manager, Ms Wan Noorazila Wan Othman, who is well-trained in quality assurance, having been an auditor at the Academic Standards and Quality Office. She is supported by Ms Hani Zalehan Zakaria (Undergraduate Programmes).

# Writing Your Destiny, Creating the Masterpiece of Your Life

Introducing, DESTINY.

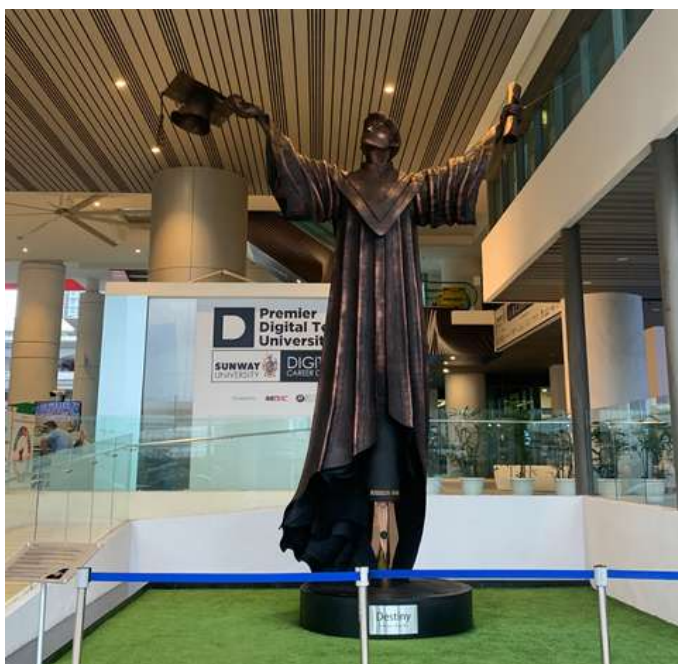
Standing at over 5 metres tall and 4 metres in width, 'Destiny' makes an impressive entrance statement at the Sunway University foyer. The sculpture was created using individual strips of mild steel, special attention was given to the robe to replicate the organic sway of the fabric.

Commissioned by Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah AO, Founder and Chancellor of Sunway University, the iconic sculpture will serve as an integral part of the Sunway family for many years to come and inspire generations of students and future nation builders.

Sculpted single-handedly by artist Infantino Fernandes, the message behind Destiny seeks to portray the relationship between knowledge, and the ability to write one's destiny.



*Infantino Fernandes – artist virtuoso  
and man behind iconic sculpture Destiny.*



# Achievements

## DBS students win the 2021 ECO Champions Award

DBS students Teoh Wan Yi, Bryan George, Tan Yin Ji, and Farhan Rehman Sherief are winners of the 2021 ECO Champions Award, receiving a seed grant of RM2,930 for their Sungai Kuyoh Conservation Project.

World Wildlife Fund's Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Programme holds a prestigious annual celebration to award the bright ideas and dedication of our local young environmentalists. The awards are given to individuals who positively contribute towards a sustainable living – and encourage communities and even local councils to support their green initiatives. The Sungai Kuyoh Conservation Project seeks to influence the mindset and behaviours of the community along a critical area of the Sungai Kuyoh using persuasion science.



*Winners of the 2021 ECO Champions Award*

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The aim of the project is to beautify a hawker area, PBS 14/1, adjacent to the Sungai Kuyoh and increase awareness of river conservation among the community, with the aid of the Six Principles of Persuasion <https://cxl.com/blog/cialdinis-principles-persuasion/>.



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*Yin Ji, Bryan, Farhan and Wan Yi during their formal meeting on project execution.*

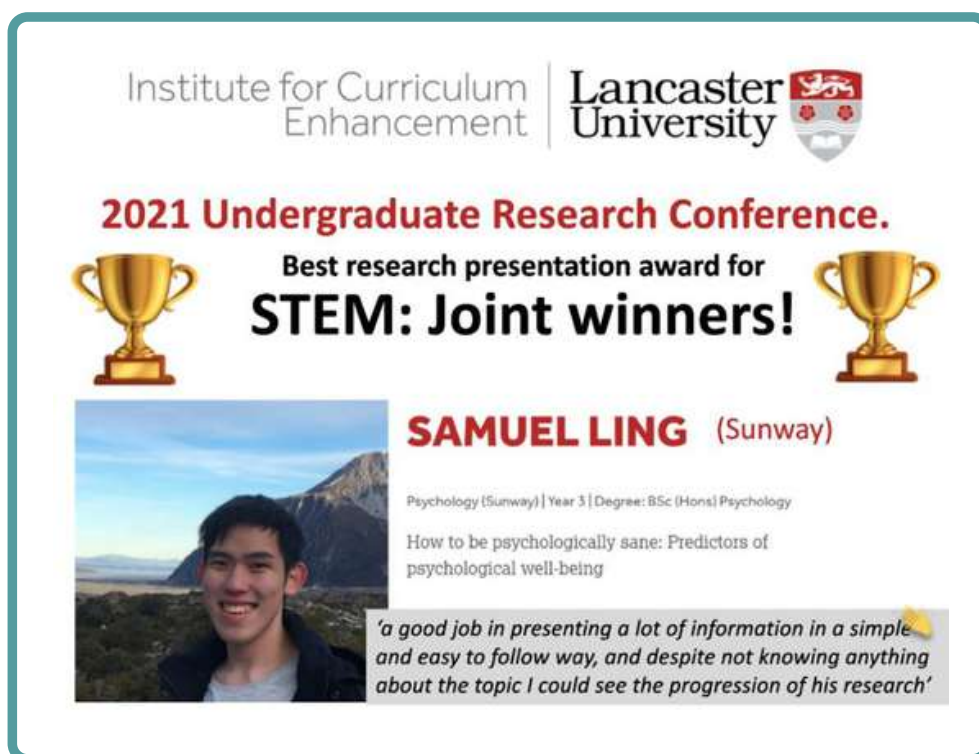
This project will take place over a duration of 10 weeks starting from 31st March and is divided into four phases: preparation, engagement, action and appreciation. The team would like to thank the hosts of this competition, WWF Malaysia and their collaborator H&M, for the grant; the State Assemblyman of Seri Kembangan, YB Tuan Ean Yong Hian Wah, the councillor of Subang Jaya City Council (MBSJ), Mr Wong Yii Sheang, who offered their assistance to the project, and also the Department of Biological Sciences of Sunway University for their kind sponsorship, as well as guidance from the senior lecturers.



# Achievements

## Psychology student Samuel Ling wins joint award at LU Undergraduate Research Conference 2021

A final year student in the BSc (Hons) Psychology Programme, Samuel Ling Deren won the best research presentation award at the Lancaster University 2021 Undergraduate Research Conference, for his paper titled, "How to be psychologically sane: Predictors of psychological well-being".



*Samuel Ling, Best Research Presentation Joint Winner*

Samuel's study, supervised by Dr Wu Shin Ling of the Department of Psychology, investigated how autonomy, fear of missing out (FoMO), and social support affect psychological well-being among Malaysian students. He recruited 154 Malaysian students aged between 18 - 24 years old for a survey and was found that autonomy, FoMO and social support significantly predicted psychological well-being. Participants with higher sense of autonomy and higher social support from friends and family were found to have better psychological well-being. On other hand, participants who had higher FoMO were found to have poorer psychological well-being. Among all these 3 variables, FoMO was the strongest predictor of psychological well-being.

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As such, Samuel's study implies that taking a break from social media and being contented with what we have would contribute to our well-being. His poster can be found here: <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/2021ugconference/samuel-ling/>



**SAMUEL LING**  
Psychology (Sunway) | Year 5 | Degree: BSc (Hons) Psychology

How to be psychologically sane: Predictors of psychological well-being

When it comes to one's psychological well-being, their overall health comes into the picture. Psychological well-being plays a big part in a person's life, with many potential factors contributing to it. Past research has indicated that autonomy, FoMO (fear of missing out) and social support are major contributions to one's psychological well-being. However, little is known about the impact of these factors among Malaysian students. Therefore, this study investigated the impact of social support (family and friends), FoMO and autonomy on Malaysian students' psychological well-being. In this study, 154 Malaysian students (56 males, 98 females) aged between 18 – 24 were recruited online and completed online surveys measuring autonomy, social support, FoMO, and psychological well-being. Results show that students who scored higher on social support and autonomy measures had higher psychological well-being, whereas students who had higher FoMO scores had poorer psychological well-being. All factors were found to significantly predict psychological well-being, with FoMO being the strongest predictor. In conclusion, these findings imply that having a greater degree of autonomy, good relationships with friends and family, and being contented with one's own experiences are key essentials for one's psychological well-being.

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#### *A Summary of Samuel's Study*

When asked about his experience at the conference, Samuel replied, "At first I wasn't sure if I should join this conference because I have always been nervous about presentations. I decided to give it a try anyway for the experience. The conference was definitely an eye-opener for me as I got to learn many new and interesting topics from other students. Some of the topics blew my mind as I didn't know there was any research that could be done on that particular area. Having to present at this conference taught me how to present my research findings in plain as simple language, as very often people who want to find out more about your research might not be familiar with psychological jargons and complex terminologies. I definitely wasn't expecting to win best web page presentation as there were many other web pages that were so well-designed."

Dr Wu was elated with Samuel's win. She said, "I am proud of Samuel for winning this award. He is a very proactive student. I witnessed the tremendous effort he has put into this research project, from conceptualizing the research to data collection and data analysis. He is very passionate about his work and always strives for the best. He has great character and also very polite and humble."

## Over RM31,500 funds raised by Psychology students in 4 weeks!

Jan 2021 saw 150 psychology students take Community Service as a compulsory subject. They were split into 26 groups working on various causes for their chosen organisations. This resulted in over RM31,5000 fund raised in total during the duration of their community service, which exclude the sponsorships they obtained, physical donations, time and effort servicing the needy, and spreading awareness using social media.

The organisations involved included elderly homes, orphanages, pet centers, and NGOs focusing on mental health and the environment.

The group that helped a children's cancer society, raised awareness, sold cupcakes, published videos. One of the group members even shaved his head to support the cause. Another group helped a child welfare organisation, by organizing an e-tournament and a fund-raising event and raised over RM4000. Another group focused on an orphanage, which houses over 120 orphans located in Vietnam, raised over RM2000. This allowed the home to purchase water heaters and electric kettles for the home. The group that helped a children's home provided enrichment classes for the young students and repainted the whole centre's interior and exterior.



*Department of Psychology's Community Service Subject Coordinator,  
Dr Michelle Lee*

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“

*This is a real demonstration of impacting the community and an illustration on how they can contribute in the UN-Sustainable Development Goals which includes quality education, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and good health and well-being.*

”

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Coordinator of the subject, Dr Michelle Lee is most pleased and proud of what students did for the marginalized and underprivileged groups. She said, “Our students are young but the effort and time they put into doing these community works is amazing. This is a real demonstration of impacting the community and an illustration on how they can contribute in the UN-Sustainable Development Goals which includes quality education, reduced inequalities, sustainable cities and communities, and good health and well-being.” She hopes more meaning projects like these can continue in the next community service classes.

# Achievements

## MSc Life Sciences Student, Yong Joon Yee wins USD\$3,500 grant from Bat Conservation International!

Yong Joon Yee, a second year MSc in Life Sciences student recently won a grant of USD\$3,000 from Bat Conservation International (BCI), and an additional USD\$500 as an award winner of the Verne and Marion Read Bat Conservation Honor.



*Yong Joon Yee with a furry friend.*

The Bat Conservation International Student Scholar is awarded to exceptional student research projects that contribute to the understanding of human-caused environmental changes towards bats or interventions that help resolve human-bat conflict or answering behavioural or ecological questions that contribute to the protection of a bat species. The Verne and Marion Read Bat Conservation Honor is an annual award to a student who inspires education and community action to protect bats around the world and address critical conservation needs.

Selected from a pool of numerous student applications from around the world, Joon Yee's application highlighted the conservation actions being taken by him and Project Pteropus in been demonstrating the importance of flying foxes and other fruit bats as important pollinators to farmers across Malaysia.



*Joon Yee learning to scale a durian tree using professional tree climbing equipment.*

Joon Yee's project supervisor, Prof Gopaldasamy Reuben Clements commented that it was probably the communication of scientific research outputs to improve awareness among local communities that probably impressed the judges.

Joon Yee is extremely happy to be a recipient of the scholarship and the award. "I am very grateful to my supervisory team because I wouldn't have received this award without their support and guidance" he said. When asked about what inspired his research project, he simply answered, "I love durians! And durians need bats!" Joon Yee explained further that learnt about the role bats played in durian pollination when he was an undergraduate student in environmental science at University of Nottingham Malaysia. He got hooked on the topic when he attended a presentation by Dr Sheema Abdul Aziz, the Principal Investigator of Project Pteropus and President of Rimba, on her work on bat conservation in Tioman Island. Since then, he became interested in pollinators and their fruits, specifically the relationship between bats and durians.

Life as a postgraduate student for Joon Yee began in January 2020 at the Department of Biological Sciences, School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University. Professor Reuben, who is also prolific conservation scientist, expressed his delight in Joon Yee's scholarship and award, "I'm very proud of Joon Yee and it was a nice bonus that he was chosen for the prestigious Verne and Marion Read Bat Conservation Honor. This is a fantastic recognition for his research passion, which evidently shone through as he had to compete with global talented student researchers for this award!"

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Part of Joon Yee's research also sees him as a research associate for Project Pteropus at Rimba, a Malaysian non-profit research enterprise that focuses on conservation science and communicating evidence-based solutions for environmental sustainability to policy makers. He participated in conducting outreach for several days to educate members of the public and durian growers on the role of flying foxes as important pollinators of durian. Joon Yee took the initiative to volunteer at a booth that Rimba set up at a major exposition organized by the durian industry.

Although his fieldwork has been disrupted on 2020 with most of the year spent under lockdown, Joon Yee is very pleased that he managed to use the lab facilities at the Department of Biological Sciences (DBS) to continue his work on pollen identification. He is very grateful to the teaching and support staff at the department, for assisting in his lab work. "I have immense gratitude towards my supervisor, Prof Reuben for his patience and guidance throughout the duration of the project, as well as Dean of School, Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam for support and advice on the project" he added.



*Joon Yee and friends from Tree Climbers Malaysia, an organisation that assist Joon Yee to deploy camera traps in durian trees for his research.*

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Prof Reuben recalled meeting Joon Yee in early 2019 during a tropical biology field course that he was co-teaching. He noticed Joon Yee's great enthusiasm and curiosity to learn about conservation issues in Malaysia then. "Overall, I find Joon Yee to be a bright, motivated, and diligent team player. It has been a pleasure supervising his work, which will contribute towards stronger protection for flying foxes. He is clearly passionate about bats and I foresee him establishing his name in the world of bat conservation!" said Prof Reuben.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic being attributed to bats, public perception on the animal has been very negative. Joon Yee hopes that his team's research will eventually result in a 'rebranding' of bats into a more positive one as they are integral to our ecosystem beyond just pollinating durian flower.



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*Joon Yee holding up one of numerous camera traps, which are used to photograph animal pollinators to the durian tree during its flowering and fruiting period.*

The University is proud of Yong Joon Yee and wishes him all the success in his research. We hope that he continues to be a champion of conservation science towards the sustainable development of our increasingly fragile ecosystem.



# Achievements



*Tee Thye Lim setting a motion-capture camera trap at Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Sabah.*

He worked on a project entitled, "Habitat relationships of sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*), and an evaluation of non-invasive methods for estimating sun bear population size at Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Sabah, Malaysia".

For his project, Thye Lim developed logistically feasible methods to gather data on sun bears non-invasively. He also developed a landscape model of sun bear habitat use at the Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Thye Lim capitalized on the unique chest marks in sun bears, and that sun bears tend to rub on surfaces with strong smells.

## MSc Biological Sciences Graduate Wins Tan Sri Dato' Seri Jeffrey Cheah Scholastic Award!

Tee Thye Lim, who recently graduated with a Master of Science in Biological Sciences was conferred the Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Jeffrey Cheah Scholastic Award. This award includes prize money of MYR2,000 and a certificate signed by the award's namesake himself.

Thye Lim's research was supervised by seasoned bear researcher, Associate Professor Dr Shyamala Ratnayeke of the Department of Biological Sciences at School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University.

Using shrimp paste, duct tape and remote cameras, he was able to capture images of sun bear chest marks and simultaneously collect hair samples. This method led to his research success. Thye Lim's publication on his study can be found here: <https://doi.org/10.2192/URSUS-S-20-00004.1>.

According to Dr Ratnayeke, Thye Lim's findings are an important breakthrough and will turn the needle on sun bear research. She added, "Thye Lim is a tough field biologist who is very independent and responds well to feedback.

He was based in Sabah throughout his research work and we communicated as closely as possible, via limited network coverage, when he conducted his field work. I'm very proud of his achievements because his work will propel research efforts on sun bear population size and habitat conservation for their continued survival in the wild!" Further reading on Dr Ratnayeke's research can be found on [this link](#).

Originally from Kerayong, Pahang, Thye Lim completed his undergraduate degree at the University Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) with a degree in Conservation and Management of Biodiversity in 2011, after his pre-university qualification with a Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM) from SMJK Yok Bin, Malacca. He became a centre coordinator at the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre in 2012.



*Sun bear claw marks on a tree.*

*(Photo credit: Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre)*

When asked about his award, Thye Lim expressed surprise at his win and was very appreciative of being nominated for it. He said, "Team effort contributed to the research success. I am extremely grateful to have had a very supportive supervisory team that guided me throughout the whole research process. Committed research assistants were in the field with me to overcome difficulties together.



*Photo of two Bornean sun bears taken by camera trap.*

*(Photo credit: Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre)*

It was a thrilling achievement at the end of this project. I hope this award will give our society better exposure to wildlife conservation issues.”

A recipient of a partial tuition fee waiver at Sunway University, Thye Lim has this to say about his experience being a postgraduate research student, “I had a great time studying at Sunway University. I thank Sunway for being instrumental in starting my research journey. I’m grateful to all the staff who supported me throughout my studies, especially to my supervisor, Dr Shyamala who inspired me to keep making positive progress despite the challenges I faced in the field and to improve my thesis writing.” Despite leaving his job at the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre in February 2021, he hopes there will be continued collaboration between the centre and Sunway University. “Sunway University’s mascot is a sun bear, too! There’s even poster on the Tabin sun bear project outside the sun bear enclosure at Sunway Lagoon!”, Thye Lim added.

“

*Team effort contributed to the research success. I am extremely grateful to have had a very supportive supervisory team that guided me throughout the whole research process.*

We, at the School of Medical and Life Sciences, wish Tee Thye Lim the best of success in his future endeavors. We hope that he continues to actively contribute to wildlife conservation and inspire others along the way. Sunway University is a champion of sustainable development and is truly proud of such projects.

“

*I thank Sunway for being instrumental in starting my research journey. I’m grateful to all the staff who supported me throughout my studies, especially to my supervisor, Dr Shyamala who inspired me to keep making positive progress despite the challenges I faced in the field and to improve my thesis writing.*



*The first cohort during their first semester: (standing from left to right Dr Wong Ping Foo, Prof Datin Dr Chia Yook Chin (Head, Department of Medical Sciences), Dr Tan Wan Chuan, Dr Ho Willee, Dr Lawrence Ng, Dr Chung Wai Mun, Dr Ooi Q-Lun and Dr Gan Jia Ching. (Seated from left to right): Dr Nor Faizah binti Ghazali, Dr Nagammai A/P Thiagarajan, Dr Nabeela Saadah binti Shafwan Badrie and Dr Khoo Vi Vien.*

## Inaugural Cohort for the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly Graduates!

The end of 2020 saw the inaugural cohort of 12 medical doctors completed their training in the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly (PGDPCE) programme, under the Department of Medical Sciences at the School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University. These were medical officers and general practitioners from throughout Malaysia. They began their training in January 2020.

With the growth of the ageing population in mind, this postgraduate diploma programme was developed in collaboration with the Malaysian Society of Geriatric Medicine (MSGM) to address the current needs of doctors. It was designed to provide medical practitioners with advance knowledge and competencies in geriatrics, which is a specialization within medicine that focuses on health care of elderly people.

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Led by Head of Department and Program Leader, Prof Datin Dr Chia Yook Chin, the one-year full time programme consists of seven core modules and one elective, with each module running for six weeks at a time. These modules include weekly live stream, three days of clinical attachments every six weeks and with weekend workshops every three months for face-to-face learning.

The lecturers for the programme were experts in geriatrics. They were:

1. YTM Dato' Dr Tunku Muzafar Shah bin Tunku Jaafar Laksamana, Deputy Head of Geriatrics Service, Ministry of Health Malaysia, and Consultant Geriatrician, Hospital Selayang.
2. Dr Ungku Ahmad Ameen bin Ungku Mohd Zam, President of the Malaysian Society of Geriatric Medicine (MSGM)
3. Dr Duncan Forsyth, Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge UK
4. Dr Nor Hakimah Makhtar, MSGM member
5. Dr Low Chung Min, MSGM Member
6. Dr Nor Azlina Abu Bakar, MSGM Member
7. Dr Aln Ch'ng Dr Hakimah Sallehudin, MSGM Member
8. Dr Goh Cheng Beh, MSGM Member
9. Dr Nor Azleen Ahmad Tarmizi, MSGM Member

Clinical trainers at geriatrics attachment centres were all consultant geriatricians as well. They were:

1. Dr Cheah Wee Kooi, Hospital Taiping
2. Dr Elizabeth Ching Gar Mit, Hospital Kuala Lumpur
3. Dr Rizah Muzzain binti Ghazali, Hospital Kuala Lumpur
4. Dr Alan Pok, Hospital Kuala Lumpur
5. Prof Tan Maw Pin, Universiti Malaya Medical Centre
6. Dr Khor Hooi Min, Universiti Malaya Medical Centre
7. Dr Keng Jun Ni, Melaka Hospital
8. Dr Harnek Singh, Hospital Sultan Ismail Johor Bahru

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Graduate of the programme, Dr Lawrence Ng, a Medical Officer at Klinik Kesihatan Taman Universiti, Johor Bahru, commented that the programme was very timely and needed because geriatric medicine was hardly a topic during his basic medical training. “This programme has given me the confidence in examining and treating elderly patients, as well as helping them prevent many common health problems associated with older people. Our trainers were a group of very dedicated geriatricians from around the country. We had maximum learning from weekly online classes and hospital attachments, all for a very reasonable fee!” said Dr Ng.



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*Three of the PgDip PCE trainees during their attachment at Hospital Melaka. Geriatricians, Dr Keng Jun Ni, from Melaka Hospital, and Dr Harnek Singh from Hospital Sultan Ismail Johor Bahru are flanked by the specialist trainees (from left to right) Dr Ho Willee, Dr Lawrence Ng and Dr Gan Jia Ching.*

Dr Ho Willee, who is a general practitioner in Tangkak, Johor expressed his great satisfaction with the programme with regard to gaining very relevant clinical skills, as well as new friends from other states. He said that it was very impactful for him to realise the condition of current geriatric practice in Malaysia compared to more advanced countries. Dr Ho added, “Geriatric medicine is very important because of the increasing ageing population but yet is commonly neglected with more emphasis given to the health of younger populations. This programme provides comprehensive modules on elderly care and management by very experienced geriatricians”.

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When asked about value-added skills that he appreciated about the programme, Dr Ho replied, “I learnt that process of clerking (which is the assessment and examination of patients) in geriatrics involves a very comprehensive and relevant history which provides a more holistic approach to managing elderly healthcare. I find this new knowledge to be very enhancing to my current clinical skillset.”

Prof Chia expressed her joy and pride on the success of her first batch of graduates, “I am happy that this programme took off and produced medical practitioners who are more adept at dealing with geriatric issues. I’m very grateful to all the instructors who took time off their very demanding schedules to contribute to upskilling medical officers!” She added, “We focus on empowering more medical practitioners to have a caring, systemic and holistic approach in managing the health of their older patients, especially now during the COVID-10 pandemic.” Prof Chia is also a reviewer of a manual for aged care during the current pandemic (See link: [Care of Older Persons in Aged Care Facilities During COVID Pandemic](#)).

The School of Medical and Life Sciences congratulates the new graduates of the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly programme, and wishes them all the best in their endeavours towards better healthcare for the ageing population. We also hope that this programme continues to produce competent medical practitioners in geriatric medicine to ensure there is adequate health care for the ageing population.

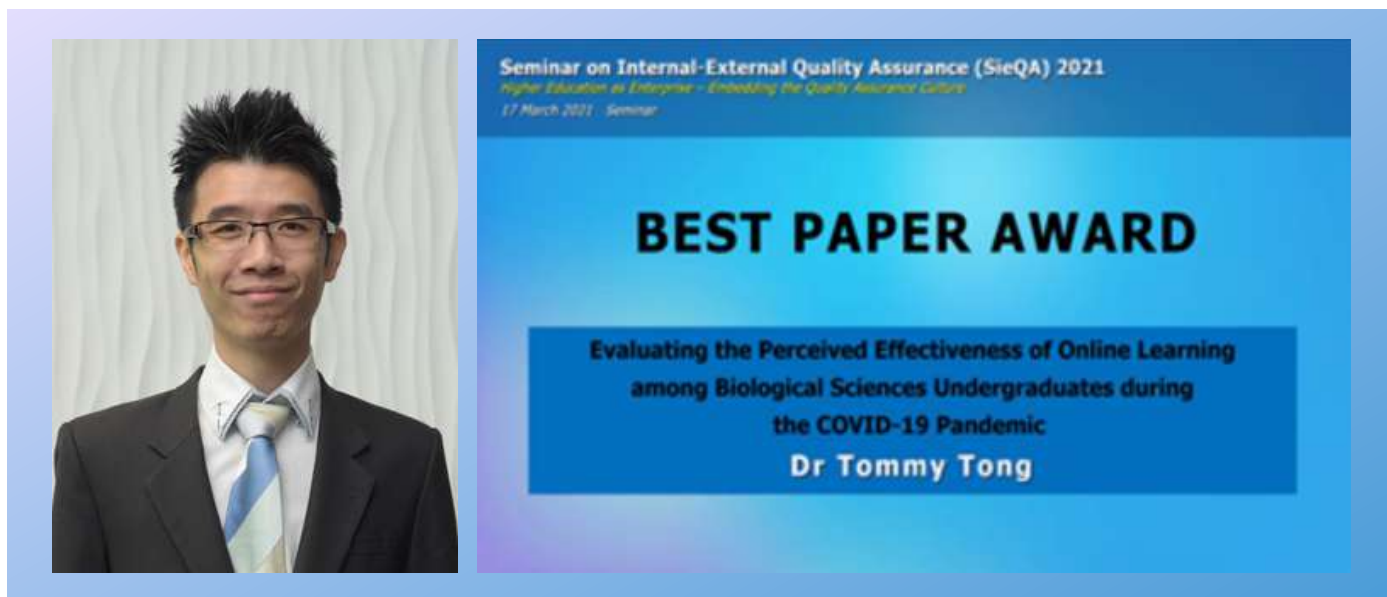
The Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly programme is in collaboration with the Malaysia Society of Geriatric Medicine (MSGM).

For more details on the Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly programme, click here:

[Postgraduate Diploma in Primary Care for Elderly | Sunway University](#)

For further inquiries, please email:

[smls@sunway.edu.my](mailto:smls@sunway.edu.my)



## Associate Professor Dr Tommy Tong wins Best Paper Award at the Seminar on Internal-External Quality Assurance (SieQA) 2021

Sunway University, in collaboration with the Malaysian Higher Education Institutions Quality Assurance Network (MyQAN) and supported by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA), Asean-QA Association (ASEAN QAA) and Asean University Network QA (AUN-QA), organized the Seminar on Internal-External Quality Assurance (SieQA) 2021. This year, SieQA looked at how the education sector across the ASEAN countries have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the delivery of quality teaching and learning experiences to students and facilitate uninterrupted academic progress. This 2-day virtual event of workshops and seminars were held on the 16 and 17 March 2021.

Five papers by the academic staff of the School of Medical and Life Sciences were selected for oral presentation. These papers covered a wide range of themes such as examining students' satisfaction and perceived online learning effectiveness, analysing students' feedback to rapid adaptation to online learning, embedding research integrity in the Malaysia Higher Education ecosystem and integrating active learning and content localisation in the delivery of responsible conduct of research education. The paper by lead author and Head of Department of Biological Sciences, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tommy Tong, entitled "Evaluating the Perceived Effectiveness of Online Learning among Biological Sciences Undergraduates during the COVID-19 Pandemic" was recognised as the best paper at the conference. Dr. Tommy also was awarded best oral presentation. Congratulations, Dr. Tommy and fellow co-authors at the Department of Biological Sciences of Sunway University.



## Dr Lee Ai-Suan, Dr Wo Su Woan and Ms Elaine Yong awarded funds from the Kick-Start Grant Scheme 2021!

Lecturers from the Department of Psychology, Dr Lee Ai-Suan, Dr Wo Su Woan and Ms Elaine Yong were successful in procuring the Kick-Start Grant Scheme 2021.



*Dr Lee Ai-Suan*

Dr Lee Ai-Suan and her co-researcher Dr Wong Hoo Keat from University of Nottingham Malaysia received RM11,100. They are assisted by with Associate Professor Dr Ian D. Stephen from Macquarie University as a senior academic mentor.

Their project is titled “Can you recognise me with a mask? Examining the effect of face masks on face and emotion recognition”.

According to Dr Lee, this project will help us better understand how face masks influence our abilities to recognise faces and emotions. The wearing of face masks has become ubiquitous worldwide to prevent the spread of Covid-19. As face masks cover half the face, people lack important facial information to recognize faces and emotions in other people. Consequently, this may significantly influence our social interactions with other people. “I am excited to ‘kick-start’ this research project as it will pave the way for larger-scale grant applications,” adds Dr Lee.

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Dr Wo Su Woan and her co-researcher Ms Elaine Yong, also from the Department of Psychology received RM13,245. They had Associate Professor Dr Yong Min Hooi as their senior academic mentor.

Their project is titled “Development and validation of parents’ attitude on inclusive education.” In the latest Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, inclusive education has been redefined; all mainstream schools are given funding and support to create an inclusive and learning-friendly environment to love and nurture all children. However, the implementation of inclusive education in Malaysia is still very much in its infancy. Specifically, parents’ positive attitudes are also crucial in successful, inclusive education.

“I am very honoured to receive the Kick-Start Grant to understand parents’ attitudes towards inclusive education. This knowledge can develop a cultural appropriate questionnaire for future studies, and to guide better implementation of inclusive education in Malaysia,” said Dr Wo.

Congratulations to Dr Lee Ai-Suan, Dr Wo Su Woan and Ms Elaine Yong. May their research bear fruits to impact society well.



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*Dr Wo Su Woan*



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*Ms Elaine Yong*

# Psychology Research Symposium 2021

## *On an Unchanging Mission: Reaching out to the Turbulent World*



### Psychology Research Symposium 2021

On an unchanging mission: Reaching out to the Turbulent World

#### Keynote Speaker:



Prof. Low Wah Yun

#### Research topic:

Psycho-social Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic

#### Affiliation:

Deputy Executive Director (Research & Internationalisation),  
Asia-Europe Institute at the University of Malaya

#### Plenary:



Yvonne Leung

#### Research topic:

Psychological health of older adults: Recent findings in Australia and Malaysia

#### Affiliation:

University of Nottingham Malaysia;  
Centre for Healthy Brain Ageing, UNSW



Tan Cher Yi

#### Research topic:

Effect of Physical Activity on Attention, Cognitive Flexibility and Working Memory

#### Affiliation:

Sunway University

#### Highlights

Oral Presentation

Virtual Poster Presentation

Free registration

March 6, 2021 | 9 AM - 4 PM  
via Zoom



For more details, visit

<https://psyresearchsymposium.wixsite.com/sun-u>

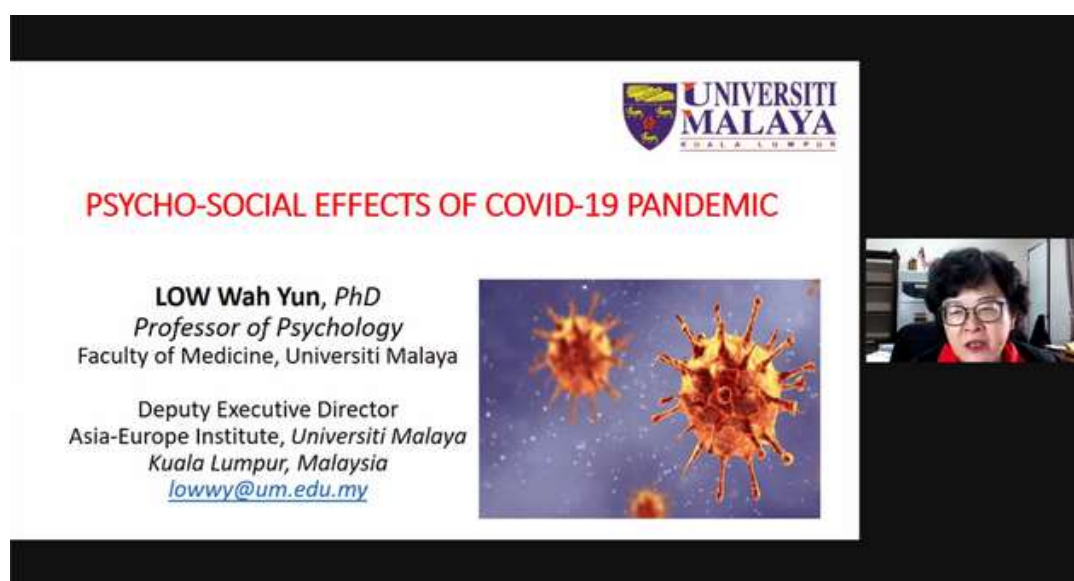


Sunway University  
Psychology Research  
Symposium 2021

Jeffrey Cheah  
Foundation  
Nurturing the Seeds of Wisdom

On the 6th of March, the Department of Psychology under the School of Medical and Life Sciences held the inaugural Psychology Research Symposium 2021. The goal of this symposium was to give students a platform to share their scholarly efforts on their research with other students and members of the Psychology community. The symposium drew a large number of lecturers and students from public and private universities in Malaysia.

The symposium began with welcome speeches by Assoc. Prof. Dr Lin Mei Hua, the Head of Department of Psychology as well as the Head of Scientific Committee, and the Dean of School of Medical and Life Sciences, Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam. The keynote speaker for the symposium was Prof Low Wah Yun from the Faculty of Medicine at University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. She is also the Deputy Executive Director (Research and Internationalisation) at the Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya. She spoke on the Psycho-Social Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic, elaborating on the impact to global mental health, urging more research into mental health issues in light of the pandemic, especially with regard to vaccine acceptability.



*Keynote Speaker, Prof. Low Wah Yun*

The symposium had two oral presentation sessions and one poster presentation session. Papers included a range of research topics within the field of Psychology as well as COVID-19 related topics. There were two plenary talks, one by Dr Yvonne Leung, Assistant Professor from University of Nottingham Malaysia and the other was by Tan Cher Yi, an MSc Psychology candidate at Sunway University.

Dr Leung spoke on how studying psychological health of centenarians and near-centenarians allows us to gain insight on how to achieve healthy ageing. Her study among the oldest-old in Sydney, Australia revealed that psychological distress in the elderly was significantly associated with more psychotropic medications and fewer relatives and friends.

She also found that older individuals with better executive functioning and regular contact with relatives and friends were significantly associated with better life satisfaction. A preliminary study in Malaysia showed that life satisfaction of the elderly can be improved through healthier diet and sense of being cared for.

The image shows two presentation slides from a virtual event. The top slide is titled "Psychological health of older adults: Recent findings in Australia and Malaysia" and is presented by Yvonne Leung, PhD, from the School of Psychology, University of Nottingham Malaysia. The bottom slide is titled "Plenary speaker: Tan Cher Yi, Sunway University" and discusses the "Effect of Physical Activity on Attention, Cognitive Flexibility and Working Memory".

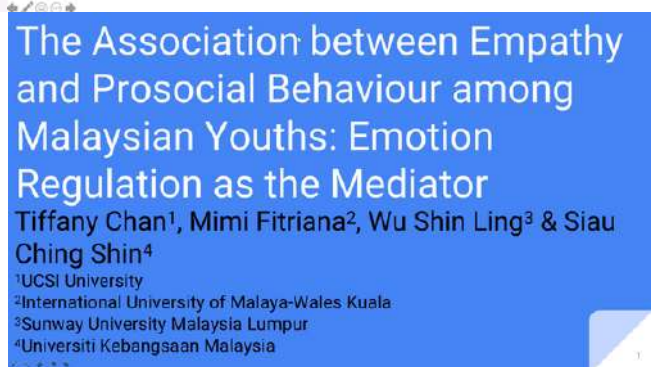
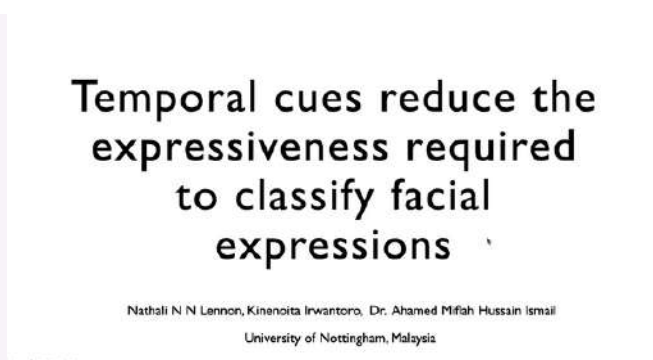
*Plenary Speakers, Dr. Yvonne Leung (above) and Ms. Tan Cher Yi (below)*

In the second plenary talk, Ms Tan spoke on her research on how physical activity affects executive function. Her findings revealed that low physical activity exerted a significant detrimental effect on attention. Hence, she encouraged everyone to stay physically active during the COVID-19 pandemic to maintain high levels of executive functioning.

There were two winners for the Best Oral Presentation Award. One went to Ms Brenda Chow Gynn from Sunway University. Her topic was “Age Difference and Psychological Factors That Predict Adoption Rate of Protective Measures for COVID-19 in Malaysia”. The second winner was Mr Bryan Leong Qi Zheng from University of Nottingham Malaysia, with his study on “Individual Differences in Facial Recognition and Holistic Processing”. Ms Yap Jia Ying, a student from Sunway University was awarded with the Best Virtual Poster Presentation for her research titled, “Cold Hearts Playing with Fire: Dark Triad, Risk-taking and Empathy”.

One of the presenters, Ashley Rachel Lim from Sunway University shared her first-time experience presenting in front of a virtual audience. “It was quite nerve-wrecking and I felt that no amount of preparation could help me if I didn’t know how to respond during the Q&A session. However, I was relieved once it was over because it provided me with valuable exposure and experience, and it was not as bad as I had anticipated” she said.

The organising committee would like to thank all speakers and participants, as well as judges and the Dean, Prof Abhi for their support.



*Some of the topics presented during the Psychology Research Symposium 2021*

## The Next Big Question?: Envisioning a Post COVID-19 World

So what's the next big question in science? Join us in this forum entitled, "The Next Big Question?: Envisioning a Post Covid-19 World", with a keynote by Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam, Dean of the School of Medical and Health Sciences, Sunway University on Saturday 24 April 2021 from 3.00pm to 4.30pm.

This forum is part of the The Next Big Question Competition: What is My Big Question? that is open to all Form 4/Form 5, Year 10/11, SM1/SM2 students.

**SUNWAY UNIVERSITY**

### NEXT BIG QUESTION

**ENVISIONING A POST COVID-19 WORLD**

To ensure sustainable progress, Science continuously needs new ideas and perspectives to ensure that we ask the right questions and find the relevant answers. Join us in this interactive forum that aims to engage Science enthusiasts to embark on a journey in pushing the frontiers of science and knowledge for the advancement of humanity. The Next Big Question Science programme has 2 components - Forum and Competition.

**NEXT BIG QUESTION FORUM**  
24 April 2021 (Saturday)  
3.00pm - 4.30pm  
Platform: zoom  
Admission is FREE!  
Open to Form 4, Form 5 / Year 10, Year 11 students

**KEYNOTE**  
**Charting a bright future with Science**  
by Prof. Abhi Veerakumarasivam  
*Science communicator, geneticist, and Dean of School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University*

A career in science is diverse and does not only involve wearing lab coats and conducting experiments. Discover how far a career in science can take you to, in different forms and shapes - but all in the same spirit of solving problems, creating greater good, and making a positive impact!

**EXPERT PANEL DISCUSSION**  
**Reflecting on Careers, Pathways and Purpose**

Science thrives on collaborations and networking. Our panel of researchers will share their own academic journey, research experience, and how framing the right research questions is critical towards developing the solutions we need.

**SPEAKERS' PROFILES**

- Prof. Alvin Ng Lai Oon *Professorial Teaching Fellow & Assoc. Dean (International) - School of Medical & Life Sciences, Sunway University*
- Dr Chua Hui Yen *Executive Director - Science Bridge Academy Sdn Bhd*
- Assoc. Prof. Dr Tommy Tong *Head - Department of Biological Sciences, Sunway University*

Moderated by Prof. Abhi Veerakumarasivam

Register for **Next Big Question Forum at [bit.ly/NextBigQ](https://bit.ly/NextBigQ) by 12 April 2021, 12pm**

Also: More info about **Next Big Question Competition** in this same link

For more info, contact:  
Wee Vian 019-337 3182 • Naomi Tan 019-387 8454

Organised by **SUNWAY UNIVERSITY** and **SUNWAY COLLEGE** in collaboration with **Jeffrey Cheah Foundation** and **Science Bridge Academy**

Register here: <https://bit.ly/NextBigQ>.

## Malaysian Allergy Day 2021

Everyone is cordially invited to participate in the Malaysian Allergy Day 2021, which is a public forum aimed to raise awareness on allergies and anaphylaxis in Malaysia. .

This event is a part of a global initiative by the World Allergy Organization and will be hosted by the Malaysian Society of Allergy and Immunology (MSAI), and supported by Sunway University.



Updates on this event would be posted on the social media sites of MSAI (FB/IG: @allergy.msai).



# Staff Showcase

## A Success Story: Dr Ronald Teow, 2016 MAKNA Cancer Research Award Recipient



### *MRCA Success Story: Dr Ronald Teow*

As a young researcher, getting grants or funds can be a rather challenging task. Knowing the importance of searching for better treatment and possible cure for cancer, MAKNA set up the MAKNA Cancer Research Award (MCRA). This award is made available specifically to young researcher, in order to encourage more participation from them in the field of cancer. Furthermore, this award will also act as a platform which put a spotlight on excellent talents and help them to grow.

For 2016 MAKNA Cancer Research Award, Dr Ronald Teow Sin Yeang was one of the recipients. He is currently a Senior Lecturer at Sunway University. Based in the Department of Medical Sciences in School of Medical and Life Sciences, he is one of the young Malaysian scientists who are conducting research in the field of cancer.

His research focuses on the biology of cancer in colorectal cancer (CRC) including interaction of KRAS mutation and autophagy, and SEPT9 DNA methylation/autophagy interaction. Recently, his research teams have also moved towards understanding the

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role of gut and oral microbiome in CRC as well as exploring nanomaterials-based anticancer candidates for potential cancer therapies.

According to him, MCRA has given significant impact on his development at Sunway University when he was a research fellow or also known as postdoc. With the existence of the Award, he was able continue his effort towards finding better treatment for cancer.



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*Dr Ronald Teow (far left), one of the three recipients of the MCRA back in 2017 (Source: Harian Metro)*

Since the inception of his research, at least two publications and a book chapter have been generated from the findings. Some of the relevant data have also been used for application of other larger-scale MOHE national grants such as Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) and Trans-disciplinary Research Grant Scheme (TRGS). Other than that, he had the opportunity to participate in several local and international conferences and invited talks, which led him to additional external research collaborations.

He encourages other postgraduate students, research assistants and peers to apply for the prestigious award. He himself aspires to conduct many more research projects and without a doubt will look to apply for the Award again so that he can contribute more to the society

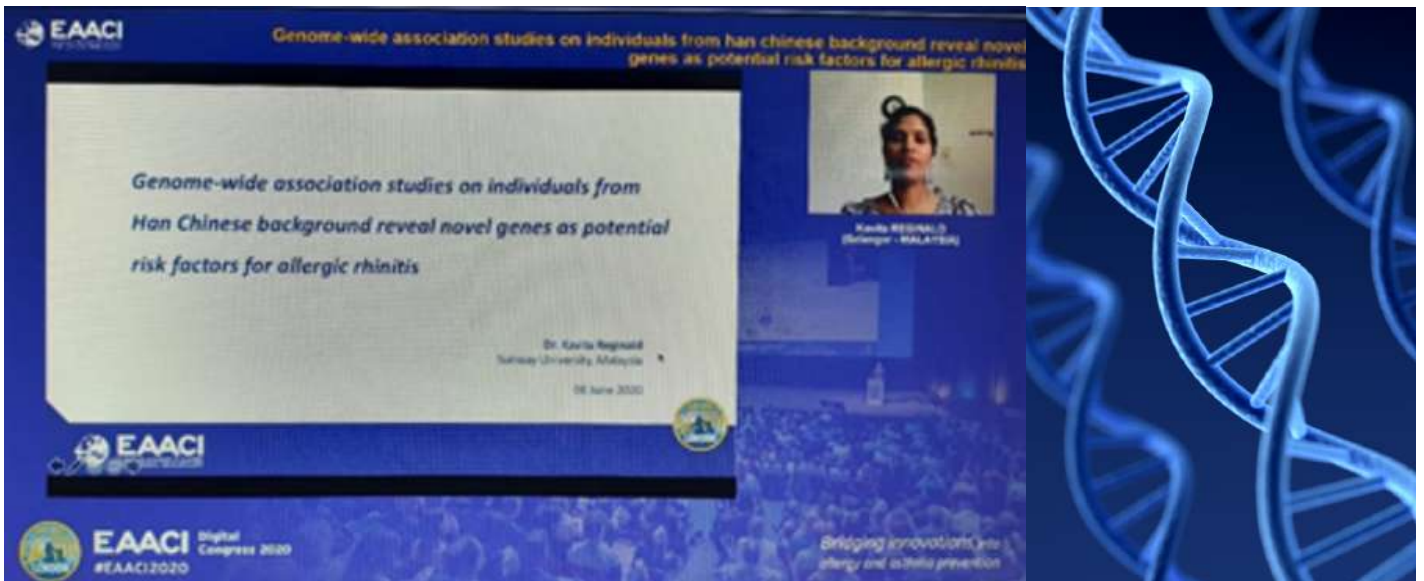
This article was featured on appeared on [MAKNA's website](#).

# Staff Showcase



## Dr Kavita Reginald

Dr Kavita was fortunate to be among the selected few to present her work in an oral abstract session during the virtual congress of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology on 6th June 2020. Her talk, titled “Genome-wide association studies on individuals from Han Chinese background reveal novel genes as potential risk factors for allergic rhinitis” was presented in this prestigious congress that had over 9000 participants from all over the world.



*Dr Kavita presenting her research during the EAACI Digital Congress 2020*

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## Dr Kavita Reginald and her postgraduate students participate in Allergy Congress.



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*Dr Kavita Reginald, one of the speakers invited for the 20th MSAI Congress*

Dr Kavita has been invited to give a talk at the 20th Congress of the Malaysian Society of Allergy and Immunology on the 3rd of April 2021 entitled "Insights on genetic risk factors of allergic rhinitis". This talk will explore the state of the art of our current understanding of which genetic modifications have been identified to be associated with allergic rhinitis, the effects of these modification on the manifestation of the disease as well as the differences observed from different ethnic groups tested.

One of her student's work has been accepted as an oral presentation during the 20th Congress of the Malaysian Society of Allergy and Immunology. Wong Yi Ru will present her findings on the "Risk factors associated with cockroach sensitization".

Two of her postgraduate student's abstracts were selected to be presented as E-posters. Teh Keng Foo would be presenting on "Two Novel Genotypic Markers Affecting Promoter Activity of a CABP1 Isoform in Allergic Rhinitis among Chinese Population" while Smyrna Shah's poster is entitled "IgE reactivity patterns revealed six IgE epitopes of Der p 2 as potential hypoallergen for dust mite allergic individuals".

# Staff Showcase

## A Book on Sloth Bears



Assoc. Prof. Shyamala Ratnayake and wildlife photographer, Luxshmanan Nadaraja, have authored a book on the sloth bears of Sri Lanka, published by Sunway University Press.

The book describes Ratnayake's scientific journey to better understand this charismatic species of bear, intending to improve its chances of survival in a human-dominated landscape.

Details of this pioneering study include fascinating, little-known facts about a unique and controversial bear whose precarious relationship with rural human communities imperils its future survival.

The authors' personal experiences and perspectives, combined with Nadaraja's stunning photography make this an informative and captivating read for both specialist and non-specialist readers.



The paperback version is now available on Amazon and the e-book version is now live on major e-book stores such as Amazon, Google Play, Apple Books, Kobo, Barnes & Noble. Sunway University Press will be releasing a hardback version of the book for local and regional distributors later this year.

# Staff Showcase

## New Staff at the Department of Nursing

In the first three months of 2021, the Department of Nursing has had an addition of three new staff. They are Kalivani Poongawanam, Mouckammal Kittappa and Nurfairy Soed. Kalivani is a lecturer while Mouckammal and Nurfairy are clinical instructors.

**Welcome to the School of Medical and Life Sciences!**



*Kalivani Poongawanam*



*Mouckammal Kittappa*



*Nurfairy Soed*

# Staff Showcase

## A statement of gratitude for Assoc Prof Dr Vellayan Subramaniam of UiTM

Associate Professor Dr Vellayan Subramaniam from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Biological Sciences (DBS), at least until April 2021. He has been a long-time donor of mice for the Sunway College Animal House, and has been helping a lot at the College, as well as in the animal zoo at Sunway Lagoon.



*Dr Saga receiving mice from Dr Vellayan recently*

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Dr Vellayan used to be the Head Veterinarian at Zoo Negara for years. DBS has been connected to Dr K. Sagathevan, Head of Science and Engineering Resources, as well as the college animal house due to former Head of Department, Prof Naveed Khan's animal work. Currently Dr Saga collaborates with Dr Chen Jit Ern of DBS on biodiversity issues. This article wishes to record DBS' and Sunway University's gratitude towards Dr Vellayan for his continuous support and generosity in sharing his wealth of experiences and resources.

Dr Saga has this to say about Dr Vellayan, "My first meeting with Dr Vellayan was many years ago when he was still attached to Zoo Negara. I met up with him to get some information and advice on the dissections of cattle brain that we were doing here at Sunway University, at the Psychology Department labs. Later, when he was the visiting vet for Sunway Lagoon Wildlife park, I met up with him again on several occasions when he was doing autopsies. He was instrumental in setting up a link between Sunway College and the theme park people. I managed to get some large specimens from Sunway Wildlife Park for our zoological collection through his connections. Later he contacted us to see if we are interested in the white mice which is available from UiTM (Lafam), Faculty of Pharmacy which were being culled after project/research work. He thought it could be better used as food source for snakes and larger reptiles instead of incinerating (which was the practice there). I was excited about it as we were buying mice to feed our snakes. So, we arranged to collect the mice from LAFAM when they have mice to spare. So far, we have collected about 430 mice from them for our animal feeding purposes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Vellayan for the mice and also other resources that he has kindly given to Sunway College, and also assisting with the work of DBS."





In terms of how a degree in psychology prepared Vivian for her current role, she had this to say, "As a psychology student, there is always a misconception of the limited choice of career to work only as a counsellor or psychologist. My psychology major equipped me with social communication analytical skills. I learnt to better understand myself, and to foster a positive mindset to be resilient and keep on progressing"

Originally from Ipoh, Vivian completed a Foundation in Arts certificate at Sunway College before entering Sunway University. "Leaving my hometown for the first time to pursue higher education in another state was difficult at first. Like many fresh tertiary students, I was very excited yet nervous due to the uncertainties of stepping into a new lifestyle and education level. Fortunately, my classmates and lecturers were so kind and helpful that I quickly adapted to the new environment. I had a wonderful time at Sunway!"

"Here I am, embarking on a new journey in the cloud industry. In today's world of digital automation, it's all about data and transforming them into meaningful insights. Analytics skill is crucial to understand the market and to use critical thinking skills to discover and identify all possibilities - *regardless of work or interest*. Always keep an open mind and a positive attitude at all time, you will never know what will happen next!", Vivian reflected.

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*My psychology major equipped me with social communication analytical skills. I learnt to better understand myself, and to foster a positive mindset to be resilient and keep on progressing.*

With regards to her research project, Vivian commented that the need to strictly comply and adhere to the scientific method research guidelines, and providing ample supporting evidence for arguments made was very good training. "My key-takeaway from her research project is definitely time management (though I wasn't very good at it back then.. *haha!*). This is just like our current work projects and especially when we need to multitask and deliver them on time!"

Vivian's final year project supervisor, Ms Elaine Yong fondly remembers her as an independent student who was open-minded to accept suggestions. I didn't have to worry about her final year project progression because she was good at keeping up with due dates. "Vivian conducted a study on the relationship between optimism, family functioning and family mealtimes. She found that family functioning was positively related to family mealtimes. I'm very happy to hear of her achievements and congratulate her on them!"



*A lovely couple - Vivian with her husband, Chester.*

On a more personal note, Vivian got married on 10 October 2020 after almost two years being engaged. “Just like how I was taught during my undergraduate study, building trust is the first step to closing the gap, although it’s easier said than done. It took us about a year to build this trust and we’re now moving into our 8th year of relationship with 3 years of being in long distance relationship”, Vivian reflected on how her degree also prepared her for marriage. “Sunway University was where I grew to be independent. The psychology programme prepared me, and still continue to guide me forward in life” she added.

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*Sunway University was where I grew to be independent. The psychology programme prepared me, and still continue to guide me forward in life.*

The Department of Psychology congratulates Vivian Lee on her promotion to a managerial position and also her recent marriage. We wish her all success in her endeavours and eternal love in her marriage.

# Where are **Alumni** they now?

Alumni

## Arjun Thanaraju is the Regional Programme Officer of INGSA-Asia, based at the School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University



*Arjun Thanaraju, a BSc (Hons) Biology with Psychology  
First-Class Honours graduate*

Arjun Thanaraju is a recent graduate of the BSc (Hons) Biology with Psychology Programme under the Department of Biological Sciences, School of Medical and Life Sciences at Sunway University. After three years of study, Arjun graduated with a First-Class Honours in 2020.

He is currently now Regional Programme Officer of INGSA-Asia, a Regional Chapter of the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA).

INGSA improves access and dissemination of science advice globally. In Asia, INGSA fosters science advice capacity in the region by raising awareness, supporting training and encouraging operational research on advisory principles, processes and practices in Asia. It builds regional and inter-regional networks of science advice practitioners, as well as acting as a support mechanism for policy makers within the region and encourages outreach to help increase the demand for science advice by policy makers.



*Arjun Thanaraju at his workstation*

Arjun's role within this office is to manage the day-to-day operations of INGSA-Asia, which include communications, budget management, implementation of programmes, and reporting. As the Regional Programme Officer, Arjun also serves as the key liaison point between INGSA-Asia and the INGSA Secretariat based in New Zealand.

He works under the Chair of INGSA-Asia, Prof Abhi Veerakumarasivam, who is also the Dean of the School of Medical and Life Sciences at Sunway University. Prof Abhi has this to say about recruiting Arjun, "Arjun was an outstanding student, excelling both academically as well as through his extracurricular activities in the local performing arts scene.

He really stood out during his internship at the Galen Centre for Health and Social Policy – receiving excellent reviews from his employers. His degree at Sunway University has certainly provided him with the perfect platform to further pursue his passion in promoting science diplomacy and evidence-based policies for a more humane and inclusive world. We are so proud of him."

When asked about his passion for the role, Arjun replied, "I aspire to contribute towards policy making that ensures equal and affordable access to quality and discrimination-free healthcare for all, specifically in the field of mental health. It is my belief that every person should be able to seek help for their mental health in the same way that they would seek care for their physical health."

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Hailing from Ampang, Selangor, Arjun completed his A-Levels at Methodist College Kuala Lumpur in 2016 before joining Sunway University. At University, he was very active in co-curricular activities such as being a member of the Sunway Peer Counselling Volunteers where he was instrumental in coordinating campaigns addressing mental health issues.

Current Associate Dean (International) of the School of Medical and Life Sciences, Professor Alvin Ng Lai Oon remembers teaching Arjun during his second year of study, "Arjun was in my Abnormal Psychology class. He was a stellar student who was very interactive in tutorials and writes very well. He's also got great character that other find endearing. I'm glad he's found work at INGSA-Asia where I believe he'll be of great service."

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*I aspire to contribute towards policy making that ensures equal and affordable access to quality and discrimination-free healthcare for all, specifically in the field of mental health. It is my belief that every person should be able to seek help for their mental health in the same way that they would seek care for their physical health.*

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During his degree programme, Arjun worked on a research project under Associate Professor Dr Audrey Lim Wei Ling of the Department of Biological Sciences, investigating the structural and functional brain differences underlying transgenderism. His study found compelling differences between the brains of transgender and cisgender individuals, and proposes a biological explanation for the occurrence of transgenderism in humans.

We congratulate Arjun Thanaraju on his role and wish him all the best in his work and personal development.

# Getting To Know You

## Research Centre for Crystalline Materials (RCCM)

This section covers getting to know our departments and centres within the School. This issue, we talk to RCCM about who they are, what they're about and some of the outputs they produce. Led by Professor Edward R.T. Tiekink, RCCM has contributed significantly to the research outputs of the university with their impressive productivity.



*Prof Edward R.T. Tiekink*

### What is RCCM about?

RCCM is a group of dedicated scientists who share a common interest and passion for the design and synthesis of targeted molecules with desirable medicinal and materials properties. Our very well-equipped laboratory is our “beloved kitchen” whereby we prepare novel ‘compounds/molecules’ for various applications. We aspire to be a visible and highly productive national centre of excellence for medicinal and materials chemistry as well as in crystallographic research in molecular materials; and most importantly to be internationally recognised as being at the forefront of research in these crucial areas.

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## How is RCCM relevant to today's world?

Our research is focused and in-line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals which are dedicated to environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

Our current three main research themes:

### **First theme: Drugs for health**

Traditional platinum-based drugs have accounted for a significant percentage of all effective anti-cancer therapies but some cancer cells have acquired resistance against these drugs over the years and there are cancers for which no effective treatments are available. The current focus on covid-19 notwithstanding, the problems with bacterial infections is a major worldwide issue waiting on the side-lines. Effective therapeutics are absolutely necessary to overcome bacterial-resistance and requires us to think "out of the box".

Our aim is to make the paradigm shift from platinum-based to gold-, bismuth-, tin- and other safe main group element-based drugs with effective therapeutic outcomes and low toxicity. Our secondary research; It is well known that it can take ages for a new drug to go from the chemistry bench to drug counter. A sensible way of overcoming this unavoidable time delay is to repurpose existing drugs to overcome the high attrition rate in drug discovery research. Thus, a drug that was once used but dropped because of poor bioavailability can be remodelled through a co-crystallisation approach by combining the active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) with safe (GRAS) co-formers leading to effective therapeutics and, importantly, avoiding the otherwise necessary regulatory "red tape".

### **Second theme: Cleaning the atmosphere**

Our atmosphere contains far too many toxic gases and these, urgently, need to be removed to avoid an environmental catastrophe.

We forming novel 1D, 2D and 3D-materials and the tailoring voids within these for the specific purpose of cleaning the air we breathe. This is because the porosity, surface area and other crucial properties of these voids can be fine-tuned by carefully varying the metal types, organic pillars and other species which then can be targeted for CO<sub>2</sub> (and other gas) capture and storage.



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### **Third theme: Controlling the growth of crystals**

Everyone loves looking at crystals, right? But, how and why do they form the way they do? The aim of this work is to control the way molecules assemble into crystals.

Why? Consider building a wall (a 2D crystal) from regular bricks. The function of the wall will depend on how the bricks are arranged...they can be arranged for impenetrability or for penetration. Relating this to drugs, usually administered as (micro)crystals, the former relates to insolubility and the latter to bioavailability. These concepts impact upon an enormous range of technologies and is of fundamental importance.

## **What are 5 of the most recent findings from your centre why are they important?**

Generally, the findings in the following describe the impact upon crystal formation and supramolecular architecture exerted by weak intermolecular forces:

Tan, Y. S., Otero-de-la-Roza, A., Jotani, M. M. & Tiekink, E. R. T. (2020) *Crystal Growth & Design* 20 3272 – 3283. doi.org/10.1021/acs.cgd.0c00082 describes how the (polymorph) crystal form of a coordination polymer can be controlled/interconverted by moderating the temperature of formation.

Tiekink, E. R. T. (2021). *CrystEngComm* 23, 904-928. doi.org/10.1039/D0CE01677B is a survey on how biologically relevant C-I... $\pi$ (system) interactions form in molecular crystals and their relationship to analogous interactions formed by its lower congeners such as bromide and chloride.

Tan, S. L. & Tiekink, E. R. T. (2021). *CrystEngComm*. In press. doi.org/10.1039/D0CE01810D

Small chemical changes, say a methyl for a chloride group, should not control the way molecules assemble in their crystals, especially in the presence of conventional hydrogen bonding right? Wrong! To unravel the reasons for this involved a very detailed analysis of molecules by the latest available theoretical methods. The answer: even a weak intermolecular interaction (or two) can exert a very real influence upon global packing of molecules.

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Lee, S. M. & Tiekink, E. R. T. (2021). *Inorganics* 9, 7. doi.org/10.3390/inorganics9010007  
This is an overview of the coordination chemistry of polyfunctional dithiocarbamates molecules which can assemble metals into small (or large) aggregates or even into 1D, 2D and 3D materials. The ligands are of particular relevance to our drug discovery programme related to anti-bacterial and anti-cancer investigations.

Tiekink, E. R. T. (2021). *Coord. Chem. Rev.* 427, 213586. doi.org/10.1016/j.ccr.2020.213586, is a survey of the formation of biologically relevant Se...O interactions in crystals and the supramolecular architectures they sustain.

## What inspires your work at RCCM?

We love making and designing new molecules, especially in our very well-equipped laboratories – we have our own NMR, our own X-diffractometer (both powder and single-crystal XRDs) and several other specialised equipment. We will apply and make use of the new knowledge in new and creative ways in order to contribute to Sunway University's Sustainable Development Goals..

## What are each of your roles at RCCM and the kind of outputs that each are expected to produce?

*Roles:* As an instrument expert, I assist in the maintenance and operation of the Single Crystal X-ray diffractometer and Powder X-ray diffractometer. I also participate in the research work particularly in the research area of co-crystal and bioactive organometallic compounds.

*Outputs:* To ensure that the SCXRD and PXRD instruments are working in optimum condition and to assist RCCM in increasing research output.



**Dr Lo Kong Mun**



**Dr Annie Lee  
See Mun**

*Roles:* As the lab manager of the wet laboratory, I am responsible for the occupational, safety and health compliance and planning in the chemistry laboratory. I am an organometallic chemist and my research focuses on metal-based drugs.

*Outputs:* I am expected to contribute to high impact publications for the research centre and to ensure the chemistry laboratory to be OSHA compliance.

*Roles:* As a theoretical chemist in the lab, I am responsible for some quantum chemical calculations to complement those experimental findings. I also manage all computing facilities available in the lab.

*Outputs:* I am expected to contribute to some high impact publications for the research centre.



**Dr Alan Tan  
Sang Loon**

*Roles:* A researcher with research interest devoted to thiolate/dithiolate metal-based drugs and weak interactions studies of related compounds via solution and solid-state NMR experiments to complement the crystallographic studies. She is also the radiation protection supervisor (RPS) assisting the radiation protection officer (RPO) in the supervision of radiation-related activities in the X-ray laboratory.

*Outputs:* Expected to contribute to high impact publications in the metallodrugs field and to strengthen research foundation in utilising NMR spectroscopy to complement and provide insights of the weak interactions towards molecular packing in solid-state other than X-ray diffraction methods.



**Dr Ally Yeo  
Chien Ing**

*Roles:* A researcher interested in exploring the solid-state chemistry relating to structural transformation via single crystal and powder X-ray crystallography, the synthesis of Porous Coordination Polymers/Metal-Organic Frameworks (PCPs/MOFs) for gas sorption study and the photophysical study of luminescence materials via variable temperature solid-state experiments. Dr Tan is the Radiation Protection Officer (RPO) in charge of the implementation of appropriate radiation protection regulations and the operations of X-ray equipment in the X-ray laboratory.

*Outputs:* Expected to contribute to high impact publications in the field of structural flexible materials and efficient porous materials including their various applications such as gas capture. Also, be held responsible to ensure that the X-ray laboratory is fully compliant with the AELB regulations.



**Dr Tan Yee Seng**



**Dr Kwong  
Huey Chong**

*Roles:* To manage the research equipment (non-radioactive) for optimum operation in the Centre with the training/practical support from RCCM staff.

*Outputs:* I am expected to ensure the research equipment are well maintained and to consistently monitor the optimum operation of each equipment in order to obtain reliable results.

*Roles:* To manage the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (NMR) equipment for optimum usage to RCCM members, internal and external users (including industry partners and collaborators).

*Outputs:* I am expected to ensure optimisation of the NMR usage and the equipment is well maintained.



**Ainnul Hamidah  
Syahadah Azizan**

## Department of Nursing's New Programme: Post Basic Intensive Care Nursing (PBICN)



*The inaugural batch of PBICN students with Head of Department, Prof Khatijah Lim Abdullah, and Course Coordinator, Harjit Kaur.*

The Nursing Department is pleased to announce the launch of a new programme: The Post Basic Intensive Care Nursing (PBICN) on 7 March 2021 with an inaugural intake of 10 students. The PBICN is the first post basic course to be initiated by the department on top of the current Diploma in Nursing. This is a 6 months full time course of 20 credits.

This course aims at developing nurses with prior experience and competence in the care and management of critically ill patients within an intensive care environment. The course will build upon this prior knowledge and practical experience through a broad range of teaching methods and self-directed learning.

The PBICN is a specialization of nursing which deals specifically with patients experiencing high-dependency and life – threatening conditions, as well as providing care for a wide variety of cases such as medical, surgical, trauma, coronary, burns, cardiothoracic, special care nurseries and more. Nurses in the Intensive Care Unit often work in conjunction with a multidisciplinary team of doctors and other health care professionals. This area can be mentally and physically demanding with long hours, extensive patient handling and high-pressure conditions. As such part of the course addresses the issues arising from the typical challenges of intensive care.

## Department of Medical Sciences has a New Programme: Master in Health Sciences!



The Master of Health Sciences is an advanced degree in the area of Health Science which focuses on research, administration and leadership in delivery of healthcare. This mixed-mode programme aims to provide graduates with the advanced knowledge and skills in health sciences to deal with the increased complexity in the field of health sciences towards developing healthcare professionals who are competent and skilled with a holistic approach in managing issues and concerns in health sciences.

Graduates of this programme would have competencies in health sciences that could see them as academicians, researchers, clinical research study coordinators, epidemiologists, health service analysts, health specialists, and health programme coordinators to name the least. This degree would also give graduates an edge for advanced-level job positions.

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The duration of the programme is 1.5 years for full-time, and 3 years for part-time.

There are 8 modules to complete:

- Clinical Research Methodology
- Biostatistics
- Ethics in Healthcare Science
- Biomedical Physics for Health Sciences
- Current Trend, Technology and Issues in Healthcare Management
- Pathophysiology & Molecular Diagnostics
- Psychology for Health Sciences
- Dissertation

Areas of research for dissertation include:

- Ageing health
- Biomarker discovery
- Counselling psychology
- Epidemiology and control of infectious diseases
- Immunity and health
- Social and mental health
- Natural products, peptide and therapeutics development
- Radiation biology and dosimetry
- Surveillance and health promotion for noncommunicable diseases

There are three intakes for this programme: January, March and August.

More details can be found here:

[Master in Health Sciences | Sunway University](#)

Candidates can download the application form at

<https://university.sunway.edu.my/apply>.

For further inquiries, please email:

[smls@sunway.edu.my](mailto:smls@sunway.edu.my)

# Thank you for reading!

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*Stay tuned for our next issue!*



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*Nurturing the Seeds of Wisdom*