Dear Colleagues,

Time has passed very quickly and it has now been slightly more than half a year since I joined the Department. The past months have been a learning experience for me and I am grateful to all the colleagues who have assisted me patiently in more ways than one.

There were some significant changes and events in the Department over the past 6 months. One was the relocation of some of our PIs and their labs from MD4A to MD6 while renovations are being carried out. Veen Senn has been coordinating this smoothly and we expect the groups to move back into a new, spacious and safer MD4A building in the 2nd half of 2013.

The 2nd Biochemistry Safety Tea was organised in August 2012 to reiterate the importance of safety and the role that every staff and student plays in creating a safe working environment. We should never be complacent or let our guard down, especially in the research labs.

Our Postgraduate Student Committee, led by Dr. Thilo Hagen, organised the 5th Biochemistry Student Symposium in September 2012 and it was very successful and well-received. I am sure the lessons the PgSC learnt through the organisation of this event went beyond what textbooks can teach them and I hope to see more student-centric activities being organised by our postgraduate students.

On the fun side for staff bonding, the Staff Welfare Committee organised a “Prawning session” for our staff at Punggol Marina Country Club. I was told that there were many excited moments when our staff caught their first prawn during the time given and that staff enjoyed the barbequing of the freshly caught prawns thereafter.

I am also proud to announce that our Department has scored full marks (100 out of 100) for the annual OSHE Fire Safety Inspection, which qualifies us to receive, again, the Platinum Fire Safety Award. This is a remarkable achievement and my deepest appreciation to the Safety Committee, including the Fire Safety team, and all staff and students in the Department for their full cooperation.

We are now approaching the examination period of Semester 1 AY 2012/2013, which is understandably a stressful time for our academic and administrative staff due to the tight deadlines. I urge all staff involved in the examination process to uphold the high standards in the Department by adhering closely to our SOPs and ensuring accuracy for all our examination marks.

As the year draws to an end, let us take the opportunity to reflect on the memories and lessons from 2012 and recharge ourselves to embrace the challenges of 2013.

Wishing all of you an advanced season’s greetings, Merry Christmas and a wonderful new year ahead!

Wish best wishes,

Professor Jean Paul Thiery
Head of Department
Professor Barry Halliwell
Recipient of Outstanding Researcher Award 2012

Associate Professor Theresa Tan
Recipient of Faculty Teaching Excellence Award for AY2010/2011

Assistant Professor Lim Yoon Pin
- PCT filed 25 August 2012: A Protein involved in detection of cancer metastasis and treatment thereof.
- Invited to give 2 talks: “Proteomics, a valuable tool in Basic and Translational Research” Bioprocessing Technology Institute, A*STAR. July 11 2012 and “Beyond the Usual Suspects in Gastric Cancer Targeted Therapeutics”, Joint Singapore Gastric Cancer Consortium (SGCC)-Cancer Science Institute (CSI) seminar, May 8 2012.
- Appointed Member, Review Committee, Inaugural SERI Graduate Scholarship Programme.

National Day Long Service Medal Recipients
- Mrs Kalimuthu Malihay
- Mrs Lee Mui Khin

Postgraduate Students Conferment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Supervisor(s)</th>
<th>Conferment date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lim Qing 'En</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>A/P Too Heng Phon</td>
<td>31 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geng Wei</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>A/P Theresa Tan</td>
<td>31 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoi Aina</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Prof Barry Halliwell</td>
<td>30 June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prof Sit Kim Ping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu Jie</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Deng Lih Wen</td>
<td>31 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piriya D/O Sasajala</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>A/P Michael Raghunath</td>
<td>31 May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Dr Udolpgh Gerald (IMB)</td>
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Our New Postgraduates!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Main Supervisor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chan Kah Fai</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Dr Song Zhiwei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chew Sweelin</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof Lane Birgitte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coronel Carrion Luis Eduardo</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Cheok Chit Fang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grishma Rane</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Wang Xueying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoang-Dai Tran</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof Ng Huck Hui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Bin</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>A/P Thomas Wacyzk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li Zilin</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Lim Yoon Pin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man Mohan Shretha</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof Han Weiping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Hock Jin</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Lim Yoon Pin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tay Song Buck Terence</td>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>Dr Yew Wen Shan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zeinab Mamouei</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Prof Wang Yue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhang Jingwen</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Dr Wu Qiang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OUR WARMEST WELCOME!

STAFF

Honorary Joint Appointment

Professor Arthur Mark Richards
Appointment: Honorary-Joint Professor
Host Department: Medicine, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine
Assumed Duty: 01.07.12

Lab Manager

Dr Yap Lai Lai
Reporting Officer: A/P Caroline Lee

Research Fellows

Dr Law Kai Pong
PI: Dr Lim Yoon Pin
Assumed Duty: 06.06.2012

Dr Nin Sijin Dawn
PI: Dr Deng Lih Wen
Assumed Duty: 01.07.2012

Dr Juvvuna Prasanna K.
PI: A/P Mridula Sharma
Assumed Duty: 22.08.2012

Dr Rebecca Jackson
PI: Prof Jean Paul Thiery
OUR WARMEST WELCOME!

Research Assistants

Ms Xie Xiaojin
PI: Dr Wang Xueying
Assumed Duty: 07.05.2012

Ms Wei Xiaona
PI: Prof Fu Xin-Yuan
Assumed Duty: 01.06.2012

Mr Yang Yuanyong
PI: A/P Chua Kim Lee
Assumed Duty: 18.06.2012

Ms Sudarkodi Sukumar
PI: A/P Markus Wenk
Assumed Duty: 02.07.2012

Ms Lim Jing Yan
PI: A/P Markus Wenk
Assumed Duty: 03.08.2012

Ms Truong Nhat Quynh Thuyen
PI: Prof Fu Xin-Yuan
Assumed Duty: 13.08.2012

Mr Balamuralidhar Vanniarajan
PI: Prof Fu Xin-Yuan
Assumed Duty: 15.08.2012

Ms Thean Su Ming
PI: Dr Kenneth Ban
Assumed Duty: 31.08.2012

Ms Han Xiaoyan
PI: Prof Fu Xin-Yuan
Assumed Duty: 12.10.12

Ms Karolina Dwili Setyowati
PI: Prof Jeyaseelan, K.
Assumed Duty: 06.09.12

Ms Leow San Min
PI: A/P Marie Clement
Assumed Duty: 17.08.12

Ms Yee Zhuangli
PI: Prof Barry Halliwell
Assumed Duty: 17.09.12
We welcome the latest baby additions to our family!

**Baby Boy Orion Wong**, second child of Ms Dee Pham.

**Baby Boy Benjamin Teh**, second child of Ms Vivian Low (PA for Prof Fu Xin-Yuan).

**Baby Girl Yew Si Xian**, second child of Dr Yew Wen Shan & Dr Yap Lai Lai.

**Baby Girl Tong Jing Xuan**, first child of Ms Lim Kai Ying (of Prof Jay’s lab).
GRANTS AWARDED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month awarded</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Amount awarded</th>
<th>Project title</th>
<th>Source of fund</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2012</td>
<td>Dr Wu Qiang</td>
<td>$595,000</td>
<td>Elucidating the role of Zfp553 in ES cell identity and reprogramming</td>
<td>NMRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr Lim Yoon Pin</td>
<td>$1,167,750</td>
<td>Novel Drug Targets for Gastric Cancer Therapy</td>
<td>NMRC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$763,000</td>
<td>DNA Aptamer Diagnostics for Cancer and Disease (Stage II)</td>
<td>A*Star</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PUBLICATIONS

APRIL—OCTOBER 2012

- Wu, W, WC Juan, M Y R C Liang, K G Yeoh, B Y J SO and M C M Chung*, "S100A9, GIF and AAT as potential combinatorial biomarkers in gastric cancer diagnosis and prognosis". PROTEOMICS - Clinical Applications, 6, no. 3-4 (2012): 152-162. (Germany). (PMID 22532451).


• E L Ng, B Q Gan, N Fanny and *B L Tang*, "Rab GTPases regulating receptor trafficking at the late endosome-lysosome membranes". *Cell Biochemistry and Function*, (2012). (United Kingdom).


• Y Y Hou, M T Toh and *X Wang*, "NBS1 deficiency promotes genome instability by affecting DNA damage signaling pathway and impairing telomere integrity". *Cell Biochemistry and Function*, 30, no. 3 (2012): 233-42. (United Kingdom).


• Y H Lee*, H Ma, T Z Tan, S S Ng, R Soong, S Mori, X-Y Fu, M Zernicka-Goetz and *Q Wu*, “Protein arginine methyltransferase 6 regulates Embryonic Stem cell identity.”. *Stem Cells and Development*, (2012). (United States). (Epub; PMID: 22455726, IF(5) 4.382).

The safety tea was well-attended by our staff and students. A/P Caroline Lee reminded all staff and students of the importance of practicing good safety habits in the Department and reiterated that a minor mistake or lapse of judgment may result in severe injuries to oneself or others. The event ended with a tea reception outside LT 29.
This is the first event in FY2012 organised by the Staff Welfare Committee (Dr Lim YP, Ms Qian Feng, Ms Aniza & Mr. Mohd Irwan) and about 50 staff participated in this activity. It was surely a test of patience and skills for all, especially for the “first-timers”, and it was fun and hilarious seeing the reactions of those who managed to catch the prawns. A big congratulations to A/P Chang Chan Fong for winning the “Best Prawn Catcher” award!
EVENTS

5th Biochemistry Student Symposium

The student symposium was a success and was well-received by both the guests and participants. Students were given the opportunity to present their posters and speak to the professors who attended the event.

Here are some thoughts from the Organising Team member, Lee Zheng Wei, on the success of the event:-

“Organising the Pg Student Symposium was an extraordinary experience for me. I had never thought of organizing an event at a Departmental level in my post-grad life. Honestly, everything started with an invitation email from Dr Thilo. Initially I thought, “that it should be an easy task” (as what he told us). After meeting for the first time, I think none of us really knew what to do and what to expect. One of the difficult challenges that we faced was to gather enough presenters and sponsorship. Students had the tendency to submit their applications or abstracts near/after the due date. Companies also did not reply punctually regarding their willingness to monetary sponsorship or provide us with any items. This actually led us to realize that proper planning was the most important task of all. We established a timeline with every single task that we needed to complete. With that as our guide, we were able to progress quite smoothly and managed to get most of the things done on time. During our preparation, we realized that, for an event to be successful, we must always take into consideration the perspectives of the participants. Hence, we tried our best to incorporate fun and interesting elements into a scientific research symposium. We truly thought that this would be a great event for all who attended. Serving in the PgSC is not that difficult or a burden. The main reason that I agreed to serve in the PgSC was that it gave me a chance to contribute something to the Department. As a committee member in PgSC, I can help to express our ideas for shaping and making our Department a better working place for all. In order to improve camaraderie among the Pg students, I would suggest holding some scientific-social events, with sponsored food, that will attract more students to participate. For a Pg student, research is the biggest part of our study. Hence, a consistent scientific and academic exchange of information is important. However, if an event were to be held specifically for an academic purpose, most students would not attend. So, in my personal opinion, a balance between study and personal life is crucial.”

- Lee Zheng Wei, Member of PgSC

Visit www.med.nus.edu.sg/bch/5pgscs.htm for more pictures from the event!
Women in Science & Medicine

Event Date: 5 November 2012

Women in science and medicine are becoming increasingly concerned with how to strike a balance between work and family life. More and more clinicians and scientists are pondering whether medicine/science is too time-consuming, with both men and women feeling the pressure as they struggle to start their families while fulfilling their career ambitions. As a consequence, a career in this field is becoming less attractive for many.

This dialogue session, conceived by Dr Wang Xueying, featured inspiring women in science and medicine, including Nobel Laureate Prof Elizabeth Blackburn and the guest of honour, Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister of State (Ministry of Finance and Transport). These successful women shared their success stories of success and how they faced and overcame the challenges of balancing their career with their life’s pursuits.

The event was well-received, with even a few men in the audience. The overall advice from the speakers at this meeting was that, yes, women can have it all, but that it was also important to define what “all” means to each woman.

Congratulations to Dr Wang Xueying and her co-organiser, Dr Ruby Huang from CSI, on this successful event.

Frontiers in Cancer Science 2012

Event Dates: 5 to 8 November 2012
Venue: UCC Theatre @ University Cultural Centre

The HOD was the chairperson for the organising committee for this 4th annual conference. The conference included an impressive list of renowned distinguished scientists, including 3 Nobel Laureates, Prof Elizabeth Blackburn, Prof Jules Hoffman and Prof Roger Y. Tsien.

The conference was opened by Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, the President of NUS, with the welcome address given by Prof Daniel Tenen, the director of the Cancer Science Institute of Singapore at NUS.

This event was incredibly well-received, with online registration sold out early, and people queuing for on-site registration. This turnout is a testament to the excellent programme instigated by Prof Jean Paul Thiery and the organising committee and, as mentioned by Prof Tenen, the turnout means that the conference will need a bigger venue next year and in the years to come.

Congratulations to our HOD on this successful conference.
What motivated you to organise this symposium especially to focus on achievements by women?
I know from my own experience, and that of many of my female friends, that many of us are struggling. We are not working less hard, even when we had our kids; in fact, we worked like crazy, albeit flexibly, after we had children. But the cruel competition in this society makes us uncertain of our future, uncertain of how we can survive, uncertain of our worth, and uncertain of where we can get satisfaction from our work to sustain our passion. As time passes, society may eventually lose us as we retreat home to find our only worth and satisfaction. However, I feel that this is sad, as we, women, offer a great contribution toward the economy and we are talented in many ways. Hence, I want to start this symposium to let others know that there is hope and there is support. But the concept would not have been realised without the support of my colleague (Yunn Hwen) who believed in me, and later others who agreed to help (Ruby Huang) and support (HOD, Aniza and Joanna Han).

What has been the most challenging task in the organisation of this symposium?
Time constraints. We had about 2 weeks before the event announcement tentative due date, so it was lots of work within 2 weeks from confirming speakers, to venues, to details, such as gifts, websites, panel discussion sofas, etc. For example, we went to Arab Street to look for gifts ourselves and O&G Department tried various ways to embroider a nice logo onto the gifts were purchased within the short dateline. Fortunately, all speakers were very helpful in providing a prompt response, and we have had great professional help from Joanna, Theodora, Rebecca, Irwan and some of my students. We initially hoped to provide door gifts, but because of the time constraints, we did not manage to do so, which is a pity for such an event. I, myself, have also been challenged with the disappointment of not being able to find any sponsors, but very grateful that the Department was financially able to support this event.

How will you know that the symposium was a success?
We initially were thinking that, due to the time constraints and the lack of door gifts, maybe we would only have about 50 people register. But we had over 200 participants, including the media. Moreover, from the online registration form, we saw that the registrants were very active in writing down long questions that they hoped would generate some answers from this symposium. From here, we already know it will be a success, because people see hope and they know they have support and rapport.

Do you plan to organize any more symposiums?
Yes, some of the speakers suggested that since we had such a large critical mass, that we have enough to form a NUS Women support club. But I will have to ensure there are potential sponsors for any symposiums in the future so that the Department can save its limited resources. As long as any symposium can offer hope and support to a certain audience group with potential problems or obstacles, or can bring people together, I believe it is worthwhile to organize.

Besides science, what are your other passions in life?
I love teaching, especially Chinese history and life values using historical stories to “guinea pig students-my children and neighbours”. Maybe someday I’ll start a school teaching Chinese history and Chinese proverbs and idioms!
Mdm Fatihah Ithnin, Management Assistant Officer

How do you feel the Department has changed over your 20 years of service in NUS?
Over the past 20 years, the Department has flourished drastically in terms of staff strength, research funding/activities and, of course, individual work load has increased as well. The Department has also accomplished significantly during the years. In today’s context, a simple task is not as simple as it seemed to be back then. The ever-changing procedures and upcoming new challenges are some factors that I have learnt to incorporate into my daily work. Through my experiences here, I get to meet different types of customers (from students, staff and even vendors) all the time and I enjoy providing my sincere services to them. The diversity of the work scope and support from the Department are two of the main reasons that I am still working here in Biochemistry today.

How do you cope being a working mum of 6 kids?
I am grateful to my mother-in-law for helping out at home while my husband and I are out at work. She looks after my children, attends to their daily needs and cooks for us so that I need not rush home to cook dinner. This helps me to stay focused and give my all while at work. I make it a point that when I return home in the evenings and on weekends to give my undivided attention to all my children. It is a simple give-and-take between my mother-in-law and me. My youngest child is 5 years and my eldest son is now 21 years old. So, the household chores are well distributed amongst them, except for my two little ones.

What are your secrets to always being so cheerful and efficient at work?
I have taken it upon myself to always look at the bright side when things are not going well – modify my thoughts to positive thinking. If processes are within my control, I will find ways to make them more efficient and effective. I would like to take this opportunity to thank NUS for conducting training for staff and the UHC Wellness team for the regular lunch exercise programmes for staff. This helps both my mind and body to remain active and healthy and able to keep up with the demands of my work. Apart from a healthy mind and body, these trainings and exercise programmes have helped me tremendously in my personal effectiveness and overall well-being.

Dr Justin Choo Kar Heng, PhD Bioinformatics (2002—2006)
Department of Biochemistry PhD Alumnus
CEO and CoFounder of Knorex Pte Ltd
National InfoComm Awards 2012, Winner for Knorex ARise

What are some secrets to your success?
Being adaptable and flexible, but at the same time knowing when we need to stand firm or be persistent in our pursuit. Be resourceful and automatic.

Who are/were previous mentors who played a key role in grooming you to be a leader?
Many people around me have influenced me in different ways. My PhD thesis advisors, Prof Shoba Ranganathan and Prof Tan Tin Wee and subsequently my research department head, Dr. Ng See Kiong, were a tremendous influence during my formative years. Their patience, confidence and trust to let me freely explore and develop at my own pace have helped greatly in shaping the way I think about leadership and the development of a person.

Any memorable moments from your candidature/work in the Biochemistry Department?
My years of working and studying at the Biochemistry Department has been one of the most amazing experiences of my life so far. I had a great time! The level of energy and enthusiasm, and the drive to excel are simply electrifying and it’s really infectious. It was also at this time that I befriended many kindred spirits, and forged a close bond that I know will last for a long, long time.

Words of advice to younger generation?
Work hard and don’t take too many shortcuts. There are only that many shortcuts that we can take before we run into trouble. Immersing yourself in what you do and push yourself to learn and understand as much as you can. It’s the only way to ensure that you are building up a strong foundation.
WE BID GOODBYE TO...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chen Yanan</th>
<th>Lee Pei</th>
<th>Sha Lanjie</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hou Peiling</td>
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<td>Liu Lizhen</td>
<td>Suresh Kumar Poovathingal</td>
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</table>

We thank them for their contributions to the Department and wish them all the best in their future endeavors!

EDITORIAL TEAM

Biochemistry

is brought to you by the Department of Biochemistry, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore

Advisor
Prof Jean Paul Thiery

Editors
Dr Rebecca Jackson
Ms Aniza Wahid

Writer
Miss Fatin

If we missed featuring your news in this edition, please drop us an email at bchsec@nus.edu.sg.

"Enjoy the little things, for one day you may look back and realize they were the big things."
—Robert Brault