香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

# BULLETIN

May 2014 Volume 15 No. 2

## STATES OF MIND
Insights on Mental Illness and Mental Health

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## Taking up the Torch of Leadership

# Professor Peter Mathieson Succeeds Professor Lap-Chee Tsui

After his 12-year tenure as HKU's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui stepped down on March 31. Colleagues and students organised a University Family Gathering to bid farewell to Professor Tsui on March 16, the University's Foundation Day. On April 1, Professor Peter Mathieson assumed office and took over as HKU's 15th President and Vice-Chancellor.

*A fond farewell was held for Professor Lap-Chee Tsui in Loke Yew Hall on the University's Foundation Day.*

The farewell event for Professor Tsui held in Loke Yew Hall was attended by hundreds of students, alumni, colleagues and friends, all coming to thank Professor Tsui for his contributions and achievements.

At the farewell, Professor Tsui said: "I would like to thank you for all your support and encouragement throughout the years. Most importantly, I am thankful that I have been able to establish deep friendships and share meaningful exchanges with a number of individuals during my 10 years here at HKU. What I miss most would be all of you, the people here, the University family." Professor Tsui has accepted Professor Mathieson's invitation to act as a Senior Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor as of April.

On his first day as the President and Vice-Chancellor of HKU, Professor Peter Mathieson met the media in the morning and chaired a regular Senate meeting in the afternoon. In the meet-the-media session, he greeted everyone in Cantonese, saying that he was honoured and delighted to join HKU, and – working with students, faculty, colleagues and alumni – will strive to bring the University to new heights.

Professor Mathieson then sent a welcome message to HKU members, saying: "HKU's greatest assets are its staff, students, alumni and friends: all these communities must be nurtured, supported and encouraged. Together we can stride confidently into the future and take HKU on to ever greater contributions to education, research, leadership and public engagement locally and globally."

Professor Mathieson also outlined his plans for the first few months of his tenure – to learn more about the University; to spend time with students, staff and alumni, visiting faculties, departments and services in order to better understand the University's strengths and weaknesses; and to engage with long-term friends and supporters of the University and with others in the Hong Kong community. ■

*Professor Peter Mathieson assumed office on April 1.*

*Professor Mathieson chaired a regular Senate meeting and met with the officers of the University and student representatives on his first day at work.*

# The Rewards of Dedication
## More International Acclaim for HKU

*President of the University of Minnesota Professor Eric W Kaler (left) presenting the Outstanding Achievement Award to Professor Sun Kwok (right).*

*Professor Frederick Leung is the first Asian scholar to be awarded the Hans Freudenthal Medal since its inception in 2003.*

The University's global reputation continues to grow, with recognition for HKU's frontier research endeavours coming in from around the world. Those recently acknowledged for their accomplishments include Professor Sun Kwok, Dean of Science; Professor Frederick Leung, Professor of the Faculty of Education; the Hong Kong Centre for Economic Research, led by Professor Richard Wong; and HKU's Liver Transplantation Team, led by Professor Lo Chung-mau.

Internationally acknowledged as an expert in the study of planetary nebulae, Professor Sun Kwok received the Outstanding Achievement Award from his alma mater, the University of Minnesota, on October 23, 2013. The Award recognises Professor Kwok's research contributions to astrochemistry and stellar evolution, science education, the popularisation of science, and his service to the development of astronomical research in Asia. Professor Kwok received the Award in person at the University of Minnesota, and delivered a lecture on 'Organic Nanoparticles in Space'.

The International Commission on Mathematical Instruction has awarded the Hans Freudenthal Medal for 2013 to Professor Frederick Leung. The Medal, regarded as the highest international accolade in mathematics education, has been given to Professor Leung for his long-standing contributions and groundbreaking research in the areas of comparative studies of mathematics education and the influence of the Eastern and Western cultures on the teaching and learning of mathematics.

The Hong Kong Centre for Economic Research headed by Professor Richard Wong has been ranked 35th in the Top Domestic Economic Policy Think Tank List, according to the Go-To Think Tank Index. Produced by the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, the Index helps identify and recognise the leading centres of excellence in public policy research around the world. The Centre is one of the two Hong Kong think tanks that are ranked among the world's leading policy think tanks.

The Liver Transplantation Team of the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, led by Professor Lo Chung-mau, was presented with the 2013 Higher Education Outstanding Scientific Research Output Awards (Science and Technology) by the Ministry of Education in March. The Team is the first in the world to demonstrate the mechanism of small-for-size liver graft injuries, and the first to report Hepatitis B adoptive immunity transferred from the donor to the patient after liver transplantation. These initiatives have provided a solid foundation for the treatment and prevention of tumour recurrence in the future. ■


*From left: Professor Justin Lin Yifu, Dr Raymond Ch'ien and Professor Richard Wong attending a joint event of Hong Kong Centre for Economic Research and Cato Institute.*


*From left: Dr Kevin Ng Tak-pan, Professor Lo Chung-mau, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Dr Man Kwan and Dr Nikki Lee Pui-yue at the Award Presentation Ceremony.*

# Five Exceptional HKU Academics Named Croucher Research Fellows


*HKU Croucher awardees with HKU President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson (third from left), HKSAR Chief Secretary for Administration Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor (fourth from left) and Professor Mak Tak-wah, Chairman of Board of Trustees, Croucher Foundation (fourth from right).*

In recognition of their remarkable scientific research achievements, five distinguished HKU academics were honoured with the prestigious Research Fellowships by the Croucher Foundation. The awards were presented by Mrs Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, Chief Secretary for Administration of the HKSAR Government, at a presentation ceremony held on April 3.

Professor Danny Chan and Professor Jin Dongyan of the Department of Biochemistry were awarded Croucher Senior Research Fellowships, and Professor Annie Cheung Nga-yin, Laurence LT Hou Professor in Anatomical Molecular Pathology, was honoured with a Croucher Senior Medical Research Fellowship. Two promising scholars – Dr Yao Wang of the Department of Physics and Dr Hayden So Kwok-hay of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering – were awarded Croucher Innovation Awards.

The Croucher Senior Research Fellowships, introduced in 1997, are awarded to local academics who have excelled in scientific research work, while the Croucher Innovation Awards, established in 2012, aim to offer substantial support to talented scientists to pursue their own professional inclinations and to contribute to the development of education and research in Hong Kong. ■

# Generous Donations Enrich Historical Collections
## Treasures of Hong Kong's Past Find Permanent Home at HKU

Hong Kong's oldest and largest commercial law firm, Deacons, and the former Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal, the Honourable Andrew Li Kwok-nang, have made generous donations of precious items to enrich HKU's collections.

Deacons has deposited its archival records permanently at the HKU Libraries. The Deacons Archives contain the bulk of the early surviving records of Deacons and its predecessors, including client files, deeds and papers, legal documents, accounting records, letter books, photographs, etc. Among all are several volumes of documents related to Chater business transactions which relate to Sir Paul Chater's estate. An exhibition on some of the collection items was held at the Main Library in April.

The Honourable Andrew Li has donated his court dresses to the Faculty of Law, which is displaying them in the permanent exhibition, *De Lege Lata*, on Hong Kong Legal System and the Legal Profession. "I wore my judicial and professional uniform day in and day out for 37 years. This Law School is our oldest and leading Law School. It is fitting that my professional and judicial uniform should have its permanent home here," said the former Chief Justice. *De Lege Lata* is open to the public throughout the year, with reservations required for viewing the court dress. For details, please go to *http://www.hku.hk/law* ■


*The Deacons Archives include a share certificate of the Hongkong Land Investment and Agency Company Limited in 1900. The Company now known as Hongkong Land, was founded in 1889 by Sir Catchick Paul Chater, one of the city's most influential figures, and Mr James Johnstone Keswick of Jardine, Matheson & Co.*

*Judicial Robe (Court of Final Appeal) donated by former Chief Justice Andrew Li.*

# STATES OF MIND

The hidden disease of mental illness can be incapacitating, but even lower levels of poor mental health can impact on daily functioning. Our scientists have been looking at how to diagnose and treat patients more effectively, while our philosophers contemplate the link between mental well-being and happiness.

# A WORKOUT WITH EXTRA BENEFITS

New research from HKU's Department of Psychiatry shows exercise – both aerobic and yoga – results in positive brain changes and better functioning in patients with psychosis.

*The FitMind Movement programme held a Yoga Mega event on April 6, with the participation of approximately 700 practitioners.*

We all know exercise is good for us. But it is even better for the more than 50,000 people in Hong Kong who suffer from psychosis. That's the finding of recent studies by the Department of Psychiatry, which is also acting to apply its results to as many patients as possible.

The studies are part of a larger, ongoing project on early intervention in psychosis that actively treats patients in the first three years of their illness, when they are more susceptible to change.

While delusions and hallucinations can be controlled by medication, dysfunctions such as memory and attention impairment, low motivation and social isolation are not as easily medicated. The latter can have a bigger impact on patient outcome, so finding ways to improve functioning is a priority.

"Psychosis patients can be very isolated, doing nothing, staying at home. You hear of occasional incidents of suicide or violence, but they are only the tip of the iceberg. The more serious thing is people wasting away their lives. A lot of our patients are suffering silently, and we are looking at how to break that," said the study's principal investigator, Professor Eric Chen Yu-hai.

Exercise is one promising lead towards that goal. Surprisingly, it was only three years ago that the link between exercise and psychosis started to be investigated, after a German study found aerobic exercise had a positive impact on a small group of chronic male psychosis patients.

Researchers at HKU saw potential for this to be applied to their early intervention work, so they set up a larger-scale study with female patients and introduced yoga as an additional variable.

## Evidence in brain scans

Working with colleagues in the Institute of Human Performance and the Departments of Diagnostic Radiology, Anatomy and Social Work and Social Administration, they tracked three groups over 12 weeks – one doing yoga, the other aerobic exercise and the third treated only with medication. Brain scans were taken before and after and patients were also assessed on their functioning. The results were hugely encouraging.

Both the yoga and aerobic groups experienced significant improvements in both their long-term memory and working memory, and the yoga group also saw improvements in attention and visual-motor coordination. Moreover, the related areas of the brain increased in size.

"With psychosis there is a widespread decrease in the volume of people's brains, but in those areas related to these cognitive functions, it seems that exercise helps some of the lost volume to be regained. Not all, but some. There was also a correlation in that people who improved in their cognition and symptoms also tended to have more pronounced structural changes.

"So yoga and aerobic exercise not only helped to improve cognitive function but they reversed some of the changes in patients' brains, and they did it in a very short time."

> "Yoga and aerobic exercise not only helped to improve cognitive function but they reversed some of the changes in patients' brains, and they did it in a very short time."
>
> *Professor Eric Chen Yu-hai*

The findings were so striking that Professor Chen and his team decided to act immediately on initial results, before the study was written up. But they did have a problem to overcome.

"The study worked well in a controlled, university setting, but how do you translate this into real life? It is difficult enough for healthy people, but psychosis patients also have problems with motivation and organising their lives," he said.

## Findings put into action

The solution was to give them an exercise plan and pair them with volunteer coaches, who would stay in weekly contact and encourage them to keep at it. This would not only help patients to exercise, but also reduce the stigma attached to psychosis as more volunteers came into contact with patients.

The FitMind Movement programme was launched early last year with the Early Psychosis Fund, focussing initially on aerobic exercise. More than 160 coaches have been trained and more than 190 patients enrolled. Early this year FitMind Yoga was also launched along the same principles, providing 23 postures, a video and a volunteer coach.

FitMind aims to recruit 400 patients by August and to also recruit more volunteers. HKU students have volunteered, as have yoga teachers and health professionals. Events, such as a Yoga Mega event, have been staged to drum up support.

Ultimately, Professor Chen said they wanted to benefit as many patients as possible. "This is the first study to look at both yoga and aerobic exercise in early intervention. Normal people can benefit from these activities, too, but we've shown patients with mental illnesses can also benefit."

*Volunteers are welcome to enrol through online application at* http://bit.ly/coach-reg *or enquire at 6908-3570.* ■


*Founded in 2007, the Early Psychosis Foundation promotes the importance of exercise to psychosis patients via various campaigns. Above is the 'FitMind is Attitude' leaflet with the instruction of 23 yoga postures.*

# COMING BACK TO LIFE

People with mental illness can have meaningful lives, even if the illness never fully goes away. Research at HKU is helping to identify the factors that improve their sense of wellness.

At what stage can patients with bipolar disorder or schizophrenia be said to be doing well? Is it when their disease is in clinical remission? Or is there something more? These are ongoing concerns in the field of mental health and they have been put to the test in a joint study by Dr Samson Tse in Social Work and Social Administration, Dr Chung Ka-fai in Psychiatry and faculty of Yale University.

They looked at 75 people in Hong Kong with bipolar disorder and 75 with schizophrenia who were all in clinical remission to determine the factors behind their 'personal recovery' – that is, their ability to find meaning in life and to live beyond their disability.

"Our focus is on positive transformation and a good sense of wellness beyond symptoms," Dr Tse said. "My feeling is that especially among Chinese, we have a tendency to think that, if I'm still taking medication, I am sick and unwell. That what will make me well is if I no longer take the medication.

"This is a misconception and it is important. Because even if I'm taking medication and carry a label of bipolar disorder or schizophrenia, I can still live well and find meaning in life. I can still function in work and interpersonally. Maybe not work full-time, but it is the journey of getting better."

## Different needs for different illnesses

That journey varies according to the disease. Personal recovery in patients with bipolar disorder is determined by what Dr Tse called 'HER' – hope, empowerment and respect. Because patients suffer a high recurrence rate, they need to feel they can come back to a recovery point again or even anticipate and mitigate recurrence.

"During an episode, patients can be doing very well. They can hold down a job and do well interpersonally. But the up and down rollercoaster of the disease can be very destroying," he said. "They also need people to look beyond their disease and recognise what they do well in terms of their occupation or relationships."

*A research cluster was set up with the Program for Recovery and Community Health, School of Medicine, Yale University, to develop and disseminate findings and enrich understanding of mental illness. A Memorandum of Understanding signing ceremony cum seminar was held on March 17.*


*Dr Samson Tse (first from left), Professor Cecilia Chan (centre), Professor Larry Davidson, Professor of Psychiatry, Yale University (second from right) and two service users.*

> "We have a tendency to think that, if I'm still taking medication, I am sick and unwell. That what will make me well is if I no longer take the medication. This is a misconception."
>
> *Dr Samson Tse*

Schizophrenics, who suffer from hallucinations and delusions, benefit most when they have a meaningful life role to which they can anchor themselves. "Their major problem is that their world looks real but it isn't, and this disturbs them tremendously. When they recover, the most deciding factor is finding a meaningful life role so they can relate themselves to their surroundings in a concrete, specific way."

Overall, bipolar sufferers tend to do better in terms of employment, relationships and other aspects of everyday living, probably because they have wellness episodes. Schizophrenics have traditionally been closeted away in sheltered environments, but Dr Tse said his team's research indicated that they needed quite the opposite approach – they needed a purpose in the community.

## User input aids understanding

An important aspect of the project is that it was designed with input from 'service users', patients who were high-functioning and not subjects in the study. The users gave feedback on the questionnaire administered to subjects (such as advising that it be kept short so as not to overtax patients) and on interpreting the results.

For example, they helped to explain the unexpected result that lifetime binge drinking was associated with better personal recovery among bipolar patients. The users suggested drinking may be used to mask the mood fluctuations of the disease, or was related to the social side of the disease, as bipolars can be very sociable. Drinking might also be a way of preserving social connections as the disease develops.

Involving users as partners in this context of research is a cutting-edge practice that Dr Tse

has brought to HKU. This spring he also set up a small research cluster jointly with the Program for Recovery and Community Health at Yale School of Medicine involving both service users and academic researchers, to develop and disseminate findings and ultimately enrich understanding of mental illness.

"We need to enter their world. The user's world view is critical," he said. "Patients also need to feel understood instead of having people pathologise their experience. Even their families often label them so if they're moody they're told, 'you're having an episode again, you need to get treatment.' Our aim is not to label people but to say that recovery is a journey. We can be at different stages of the journey and no two people have the same journey. Our work is to help people understand that." ■

# A WAKE-UP CALL FOR THE SLEEP-DEPRIVED

It's a chicken-and-egg problem: is poor sleep a symptom of poor mental health or a cause?

Sleep is essential to our existence but tell that to the multitudes of people in Hong Kong and elsewhere who are in chronic need of more sleep. You may think you can catch up later, but think again, warns Dr Esther Lau of Psychology who has conducted a number of studies on sleep.

"When I was younger, I thought this way, too," she said. "I could stay up all night and study hard and play hard and I thought sleep was not important.

"But a growing body of research evidence is pointing to the fact that sleep does affect your functioning to a large extent and accumulating sleep debts predicts how well you function during the day."

For one thing, poor sleep over the long run can affect your higher thinking skills, which involve complex executive functioning that enables you to keep track of many different things at the same time and access the information you need to do that. Dr Lau and her colleagues found both adults and children with sleep apnoea, a chronic condition that causes interrupted breathing during sleep, had impaired executive functioning even after impairments in lower-level functioning were reversed.

## Sleep-mood connection

They are also showing, in another study, that poor sleep can affect your mental health over the long run. This research involves an on-going longitudinal study with several thousand people, mostly university students, that is looking at the pathway between sleep and mood, and the mediating role of thinking styles (pessimist or optimist). As Dr Lau put it: "Is your mood so bad that your sleep is affected, or is it the other way around?" The preliminary results suggest a greater role for sleep.

"We are seeing that poor sleep is not just a symptom of poor mental health. It predicts your mental health. In the past sleep was often considered a symptom, so if you had depression and you had insomnia, the depression caused your insomnia. But in recent years there are more and more studies showing sleep actually predicts your mental health, even in people who do not have any depression or other problems. So if you aren't sleeping well on a constant basis, it has a large impact on your well-being a few years later," she said.

Dr Lau is also interested in researching normal sleep, not only disorders. Here, she sees opportunities for using sleep towards positive ends. A study on 'chronotypes' – whether you are a morning or evening person – produced unusual findings by focussing on students in university halls in Hong Kong. While other studies show morning people perform better on most measures, the opposite happened in the halls. Night owls adjusted better and were less likely to quit hall a year later, a finding which could help students make decisions about living in a hall and inform administrators on hall policies and education.

> "If people are having trouble sleeping, we shouldn't look at it as something that will go away and think that as long as the person is not diagnosed with depression or an anxiety disorder it doesn't warrant clinical attention."
>
> *Dr Esther Lau*

## Take a nap

Napping is another normal sleeping activity of interest and it is showing potential for a therapeutic role. Dr Lau has shown it has a positive impact on higher cognitive functioning, echoing her findings on sleep apnoea and adding to other studies that found it improved attention, vigilance and mood. In future she hopes to explore links between napping and emotional processing. "If we find napping has a positive effect on emotional processing, it could be beneficial for clinical populations such as people with traumatic memories or post-traumatic stress disorder who are dealing with a lot of negative emotions," she said.

Dr Lau directs a sleep laboratory dedicated purely to research and she works with a wide range of collaborators in different branches of Medicine and Social Sciences.

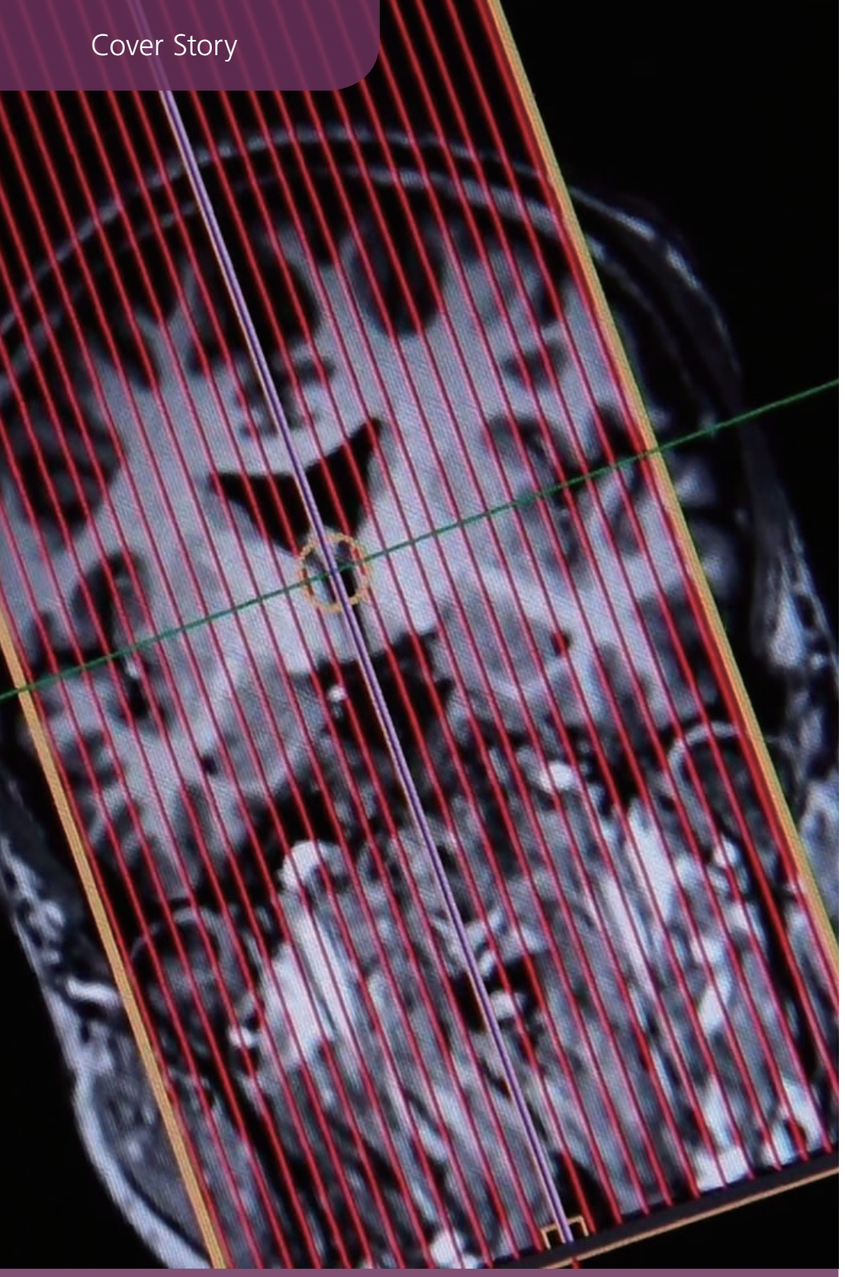
"I try to throw sleep questions into whatever study I'm doing," she said. "Sleep is important, that's the bottom line. And it plays a major role in one's well-being. So if people are having trouble sleeping, we shouldn't look at it as something that will go away and think that as long as the person is not diagnosed with depression or an anxiety disorder it doesn't warrant clinical attention. I think that is just wrong thinking.

"My hope is that our research programme can reveal the different roles of sleep in our lives in predicting mental health, cognitive performance, academic functioning, even social functioning.

"My dream would be if the University could provide sleep pods so people could pop in and sleep for 30 minutes. That would boost the performance of both students and staff, and the mood and mental health of the University community," said Dr Lau. ■

*The bedrooms in the HKU Sleep Laboratory located at the Hong Kong Jockey Club Building for Interdisciplinary Research.*

*Dr Lau giving a public lecture based on research findings from the HKU Sleep Laboratory and other sleep studies.*



# PICTURING MENTAL HEALTH

HKU scientists are using neuroimaging to explore the links between brain activity and mental health and how one can affect the other.

Neuroscience is a hot and fast-developing field attracting large amounts of research funding in Europe, the United States and China, and at HKU it has been named a new Strategic Research Theme, eligible for seed funding to incubate new research leads.

One of the most experienced scholars in this field at HKU is Professor Tatia Lee, May Professor in Neuropsychology and Chair Professor of Psychology, who began work on neuroimaging in 2000 before HKU had its own functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) facilities.

Professor Lee's early research focussed on areas of the brain that lit up when someone was lying. She also examined the brain processes associated with affective processing (making decisions based on an emotional response), and in men who abused their spouses.

Her work has since converged to look at experiences that exert positive impacts on brain functions such as experience-induced neuroplasticity, and negative impacts such as substance use and negative emotions.

She has tied these seemingly disconnected concepts and research methodologies together by focussing on the place where they are all manifested – in the brain – to try to understand how behaviour is tied to the brain's structure, activity and connectivity, and whether changes in behaviour can produce changes in the brain (*i.e.* neuroplasticity).

> "Neuroimaging lets us see the brain in an active state, so we can look at the different factors affecting the brain and what we might do to change the brain."
>
> *Professor Tatia Lee*

## A window to the brain

"Neuroscience opens a window to look at how different factors affect the brain and how we can do something to change the brain," she said. "If, by using neuroimaging, we notice certain changes in the brain structure or function, could we design a treatment to reverse the observed change and also the subsequent behavioural change? And can we do something beneficial to protect the brain?"

Working with collaborators in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and overseas, one of her more recent studies has looked at brain activity in depressed patients related to social decision-making. This piece of work is crucial for understanding the influence of negative moods on social functioning.

Yet another study has probed the negative brain effects caused by heroin abuse. Professor Lee provided fMRI results on long-time users who had kicked the habit but were nonetheless found to have signs of premature ageing. These signs were evident in the patients' telomerase activity, which interacted with the heroin to affect the prefrontal cortex, an area of the brain that serves the high order cognitive functions that define the very unique characteristics of individual human beings.

"We want to look next at whether treatment will change the brain activity. Will the changes in the brain bounce back to a state comparable with the controls?" she said.

## 'Use it or lose it'

The prospect of inducing changes in the brain is also of interest for healthy individuals, particularly in terms of the ageing brain. Adopting the concept of experience-induced neuroplastic changes, Professor Lee has already demonstrated that mental practice in the form of meditation results in positive changes to the brain among younger adults (see *Bulletin* May 2012, Volume 13, Number 2). She is preparing to repeat that study on older people to see if such mental training can protect the brain from the inevitable consequence of natural ageing and promote healthy ageing.

She has also found positive results in a separate study looking at the effects of cognitive training exercises on the ageing brain.

"Cognitive training follows the principle for the brain that if you don't use it, you lose it," she said.

"Neuroimaging lets us see the brain in an active state, so we can look at the different factors affecting the brain and what we might do to change the brain. With that knowledge, we can consider things like brain protection, brain power and the building of resilience in the brain, which are all tied to the ageing brain."

All of which has promising implications for the mental health of both healthy and unwell populations. ■

*Neuroimaging technique* e.g. *Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) allows us to study how brain activity, structures, and connectivity change in response to experience* i.e. *neuroplasticity.*

# THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Does good mental health equate with happiness? That is a question for philosophers, not scientists.

Mental and emotional well-being are not just the purview of psychologists and psychiatrists. Philosophers are interested, too, including Dr Timothy O'Leary, Associate Professor of Philosophy, who also holds a Masters degree in counselling and works with clients in a small private practice.

Dr O'Leary instigated the 'Happiness East and West' project in his Department in 2009 to look at various factors that affect happiness, including pain and suffering and, more recently, emotions.

"Traditionally in philosophy, emotion has been seen almost as the enemy. Philosophy is about reason and truth and so on and emotion is messy and deceives us. But there is a greater sense nowadays that even within philosophy, you have to take emotion into consideration. That's especially true if you're addressing happiness and well-being," he said.

Happiness in itself is a topic that has come in and out of favour in philosophy. Confucius wrote of joy and pleasure, but not happiness. The ancient Greeks saw happiness not so much as a state of psychological well-being – which is the modern Western view – but as something that could be discerned by others.

"The Greeks thought of happiness as an objective thing. So if your life is going well and you have friends, then you are happy or blessed. Whereas today our concepts of happiness tend to be much more about how we are feeling right at this moment in our lives, what our emotional state is," he said.

## The flip sides of feeling happy

The linking of one's feelings to happiness raises the question of whether happiness and emotional or mental health are equal partners. Can you be happy if your internal life is in turmoil?

"I don't think they're synonymous," he said, "but they're pretty closely related. A person suffering from a serious psychological disorder, such as depression, is not going to be able to achieve things or feel good, but that is not the only thing that stops a person from being happy. Your partner could die, terrible things could happen to your children – you might have mental health but you aren't going to be happy any more. Mental health is about resilience and coping with these things."

Conversely, happiness can embrace other emotions besides cheerful ones, as reflected in the projects under 'Happiness East and West', including an international conference on happiness, seminars related to pain and suffering (see *Bulletin* May 2012, Volume 13, Number 2), a contracted book by Post-doctoral Fellow Edoardo Zamuner on the philosophy of emotions, and a forthcoming special edition of *Philosophical Topics* on happiness, edited by Dr O'Leary and Dr Zamuner.

"You can be sad or angry but it doesn't mean you're not happy," Dr O'Leary said. Emotional regulation makes the difference and this nuanced understanding is important in understanding happiness.

"Emotions are difficult, they're painful, they're confusing. For a more rounded concept of happiness, you have to take them into consideration. A person living a happy life would have to be someone in touch with their emotions, who experiences them, follows them and also knows when not to follow them. That's where emotion regulation comes in.

> "Traditionally in philosophy, emotion has been seen almost as the enemy. Philosophy is about reason and truth and so on and emotion is messy and deceives us. But there is a greater sense nowadays that even within philosophy, you have to take emotion into consideration."
>
> *Dr Timothy O'Leary*

"There's a great line in Aristotle: 'Anybody can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not within everybody's power and is not easy.'"

## Anger as a disguise

The Roman senator Seneca also wrote on anger, saying one of the difficulties was that people enjoyed it.

"I say to my clients that it's much easier to be angry at a person than to be sad about them. A lot of problems come from certain emotions being disguised as other emotions." Which feeds back into happiness and mental health because they can affect relationships.

"In ancient Western philosophy, one of the roles of philosophy was as a kind of therapy. Seneca for example said, look at all these Roman senators getting angry with each other and making life difficult for everyone. How should we deal with this anger? One thing he recommended was to talk about it, which can modify the anger," he said.

That thought connects with the counsellor in Dr O'Leary. As with anger, happiness is something that can be talked out, too, at least from a philosophical perspective, and as with anger it can run its course. Once the current publications are finalised, the 'Happiness East and West' project will likely come to an end. "My interest in happiness now is being satisfied through my work in counselling," he said. ■


# BIRTH RIGHT

Charity uses Dental Age Assessment methods to enable everyone to have the basic human right of a birthday.

Dental postgraduate Dr Jayakumar Jayaraman has launched the world's first charity to promote accurate birth records through Dental Age Assessment (DAA), with the aim of helping people protect their identity and rights.

The charity is called the DOB Foundation – with DOB standing for Date of Birth – and was officially launched in last August at HKU's Prince Philip Dental School, with the first centre being set up in India.

"Birth registration is a fundamental human right," said the final-year PhD student. "It is proof of a person's existence, it can protect against child labour and child marriage, and can give people access to education and health care."

Advertisements in Chennai, India, encourage people to bring their children to the DOB Foundation centre for free assessment, after which they get a birth certificate which is now recognised as legally valid by the authorities. In addition, the charity also arranges dental checkups and treatment, spreading the word about oral hygiene across the community.

*Dr Jayaraman interacting with children without birth records.*

## Wide implications

Registering births has wider implications too in areas such as immigration, citizenship, welfare, political asylum, basic human rights and criminal prosecution. Where the latter is concerned Dr Jayaraman cites a recent gang rape in India, where one of the accused claimed to be under 18 to avoid being tried as an adult. "He got three years, the others got the death penalty," he said. "In such serious cases, it is crucial to be accurate."

> "Only about 50 per cent of the world's children are registered, which has far-reaching implications for economic predictions including food supply, schools and health care provision."
>
> *Dr Jayakumar Jayaraman*

He first became interested in Dental Age Assessment research in connection with asylum seekers in the United Kingdom (UK). Refugees aged under 18 are entitled to stay and be given a home and funding, while those over 18 can be deported if they are not considered a real refugee, so this kind of assessment is used widely there.

When he proposed pursuing this area as his PhD project, Dr Jayaraman's former Hong Kong supervisor Professor Nigel King recommended that he go to the UK and work with Professor Graham Roberts at the King's College London Dental Institute. He spent a month in the UK learning the methodology.

Dental Age Assessment has been found to be more accurate than more commonly used methods such as bone development or sexual maturity, both of which can be affected by more external factors like vitamin deficiency.

In the near future, he expects this methodology to have a new use – for climate change refugees. Scientists predict that by the 2050s, rising sea levels will force people living on low-lying areas to migrate. "Many of the people who will be effected don't register births, but this will become more important when they have to move."

DAA could also make for more accurate population statistics, which can have long-term implications for a country's economic policy. Dr Jayaraman discovered during his research that in some countries the amount of births registered is surprisingly low. UNICEF figures show that in India only around 41 per cent of births are registered, while for China the figures are simply not there. "In fact only about 50 per cent of the world's children are registered, which has far-reaching implications for economic predictions including food supply, schools and health care provision."

## Educating dentists

Not only has he set up the charity, but he also had to take steps to educate dentists. "As part of our research in India we interviewed 200 dentists from Chennai to evaluate their DAA abilities. It turned out very few knew how to carry out the tests accurately. So now we are holding workshops there to teach them."

He did his own training at DARLING (Dental Age Research London Information Group) and is keen to share that knowledge. "India is not the only place where dentists lack the skills to assess age accurately. In fact, most dental training institutions around the world do not actually teach it. Currently there is no universal legislation on DAA methodology, and that is something we would like to change – we would like to establish a universal protocol."

They have sent proposals to many organisations dealing with birth date disputes, a prime example being the Australian Human Rights Commission, which is dealing with more and more maritime refugee arrivals – 18,000 in 2012. "Before they were doing bone assessment to determine age," said Dr Jayaraman, "but now they are slowly switching to other methods, particularly DAA. There are numerous uses for this process."

Date of Birth Foundation actively engages with the community and is further expanding its reach to other developing countries in the world. To learn more about their activities or to make a contribution, please visit *http://www.dob-foundation.org* ■

*As part of the project titled 'Giving an identity to undocumented children in Chennai, India', children registering for oral health checkup.*

*Children enjoying the puppet show portraying the importance of birth registration in Minjur area of Chennai city, India, in December, 2013.*

*A critically endangered Golden-coin turtle.*

# LEGAL PROTECTION FOR FLORA AND FAUNA

A study by an HKU's Law Faculty-led team has found Hong Kong laws to protect animals and plants are badly in need of updating.

While doing research into animal welfare legislation in Hong Kong in 2009, Ms Amanda Whitfort of HKU's Law Faculty realised that a related issue was in urgent need of addressing too – conservation laws. An animal law expert, she applied for Knowledge Exchange funding for an Impact Project in 2011, and together with an interdisciplinary team of experts, began studying five key Ordinances with a view to assessing whether they give adequate protection to our natural heritage.

*From left: Ecological Consultant Dr Andrew Cornish; Ms Amanda Whitfort, Associate Professor of Law; and Dr Fiona Woodhouse, Deputy Director (Welfare), Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong).*

The Ordinances included the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance, the Forests and Countryside Ordinance, the Fisheries Protection Ordinance, and the Country Parks and Marine Parks Ordinances. The conclusion that Ms Whitfort and her team came to was that the legislation was inadequate and outdated. "It is hardly surprising," she said, "some of the laws go back to 1870. This is the first time there has been a formal review of the laws protecting our native wild species.

"Attitudes to conservation have changed and some laws are no longer appropriate. For instance the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance was not drafted from a conservation standpoint but to stop hunting," she said. "So it does not protect those animals at conservation risk of having their habitats concreted over, but only those that were historically hunted. The law also excludes fish, leaving rare species unprotected."

The review will contribute to the formulation of Hong Kong's first Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan as required under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity. The authors of the review included conservation consultant Dr Andrew Cornish, wildlife management consultant Rupert Griffiths and Dr Fiona Woodhouse from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. They sought expert advice from ecology professors in HKU's School of Biological Science, Professor David Dudgeon, Professor Yvonne Sadovy and Professor Gray Argust Williams as well as input from the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department.

> "Ironically some species that are actually harmful to the environment are being protected by the current laws, while others – such as the endemic Hong Kong Paradise Fish, which is rare and at risk – are not."
>
> *Ms Amanda Whitfort*

## Science and law together

"The project brought science and law together and benefited from a clear dialogue. The two disciplines don't usually speak the same language," Ms Whitfort said. "We consulted ecology and biodiversity experts on the problems, formulated legislative solutions, then refined them through scientific input."

The team's primary recommendation is to update the list of animals protected by the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance. Some 500 species of terrestrial animals have been identified as being of conservation concern during the last two decades, yet the Ordinance has not been updated since 1996. "A list of species of conservation concern should be drawn up and used to inform and update our local laws including the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance," Ms Whitfort said. "The list should be based on best-practice international criteria such as those used to develop the global Red List of Endangered Species.

"Ironically some species that are actually harmful to the environment are being protected by the current laws, while others – such as the endemic Hong Kong Paradise Fish, which is rare and at risk – are not," said Ms Whitfort.

## Invasive alien species

With this in mind, the team also recommended that a list of invasive alien species be drawn up. Ms Whitfort said: "HKU scientists have identified numerous non-native invasive species, which have established themselves locally and which may be a danger to native species. The Government is required under the international Convention on Biological Diversity to come up with a plan to control these non-native species."

Not all legislation was found to be inadequate. The Country Parks Ordinance is basically sound, although enforcement of its laws against poaching needs to be improved. But, while the Forests and Countryside Ordinance has historically protected plants of value to collectors, it does not identify plants that are of conservation concern. Also, the team would like to see protection extended to cover rare plants on private as well as government land.

The Fisheries Protection Ordinance has been improved – trawling was banned last year – but "protection legislation should be extended to vulnerable marine fish outside of the tiny area of marine parks," said Ms Whitfort. "Rare freshwater fish are also in need of protection. At least 20 species are currently at risk and another four have already gone extinct."

In addition, the review recommends that a study is done to determine the optimum harvesting capacity for sustainable fishing and to develop new regulations for recreational fishing.

In all, the team made 15 recommendations, aimed at informing the Government's formulation of its Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, due for implementation in 2015.

Next on the agenda, Ms Whitfort will be conducting research into the trade in endangered species through Hong Kong. "Hong Kong is a major conduit for illegal trade and the courts are not taking it seriously enough." ■


*The very high market value of the Golden-coin turtle is driving its illegal capture in Hong Kong.*

*Incense trees have been widely chopped down in Hong Kong in recent years for making agarwood, which is a highly priced traditional Chinese medicine.*


# HONOURABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

Each year the University honours individuals who have made important contributions in their fields and in the community.

In 2013–2014, Honorary Degrees were bestowed on five individuals for outstanding professional work and achievements and Honorary Fellowships were awarded to eight individuals for contributions to the community and HKU.

Nine new Endowed Professorships were also awarded to HKU scholars, and four professors received successive appointments. The Inaugural University Laureate was also named, distinguished Sinologist Professor Jao Tsung-I.

## HONORARY DOCTORATES


### The Honourable Wong Yan-lung

**Doctor of Laws *honoris causa***

The Honourable Wong Yan-lung has travelled far, from helping his father hawk ice creams and soft drinks when he was a boy, to becoming the youngest Secretary for Justice in the Hong Kong Government. It was a journey made possible by his remarkable talents.

Mr Wong was an outstanding student who earned a scholarship to study law at Magdalene College at the University of Cambridge, forfeiting his place at HKU to do so. He earned BA and MA degrees there and returned to Hong Kong in 1986 to pursue a career at the Bar. He gained a pupillage with Andrew Li who, some years later, would be Chief Justice when Mr Wong was Secretary for Justice.

While practising law, Mr Wong did not forget those less fortunate and he has been deeply committed to the Hong Kong Christian Concern for the Homeless Association. He and his wife even donated their wedding gifts to this charity.

In 2005 he was appointed Secretary for Justice, a post he held for seven demanding years that included significant constitutional challenges, a reform to the legal framework for mediation and international arbitration, and expanded reciprocal cooperation with the Mainland. He was awarded the Grand Bauhinia Medal in 2012.

### Professor Huang Jiefu

**Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa***

One of the last wishes of the father of Professor Huang was to see his son become a doctor. The young boy more than amply fulfilled that promise, becoming not only a doctor but a significant figure in China's healthcare reform.

Professor Huang performed the first liver transplantation in China in 1994 and the first combined liver-kidney transplantation in Asia in 1997. In 2001 he was appointed Vice-Minister of Health and held that post until 2013, during which time he set his sights on modernising China's medical system.

Among his many achievements, he founded and still chairs the National Organ Donation and Transplantation to establish a national system of organ donation. He took the first steps towards introducing a system for accrediting doctors with specialist skills. He espoused greater central government support for private hospitals in China. And he was instrumental in founding the Hong Kong University-Shenzhen Hospital, which provides first-class medical services to anyone in need, irrespective of wealth or status.

His work has been underpinned by a vision: "My dream as a transplant surgeon is to establish an ethical, sustainable and healthy organ transplantation system consistent with internationally accepted ethical standards to meet the needs of the Chinese people."

# HONORARY DOCTORATES

## Dr Ann Hui On-wah

**Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa***

One of Hong Kong best-known film directors, Dr Ann Hui On-wah is a graduate of HKU and the London Film School. In a career spanning more than 40 years she has made 24 full-length films, as well as countless TV dramas, documentaries and comedies, won numerous awards and is renowned as one of Hong Kong's most influential film-makers.

Her first movie, a thriller called *The Secret*, attracted a lot of attention and that fascination has continued through movies as varied as *Boat People* (1982) filmed on Hainan island and dealing with the Vietnamese refugee problem, *Love in a Fallen City* (1984), *Summer Snow* (1995), *Ordinary Heroes* (1999) and *July Rhapsody* (2002). Her 2011 movie *A Simple Life* called for respect for long-forgotten values and, put Dr Hui right back in the spotlight, garnering many awards including her fourth for Best Director at the Hong Kong Film Awards.

Dr Hui has made an impact through the social relevance of her movies, the variety of genres in which she has worked, her courage and sensitivity when tackling controversial themes, and the excellence of her directing.

In 2008 she was awarded the Grand Prize at the Fukuoka Film Festival for her outstanding contribution to Asian culture. Her work has played a significant role in presenting Hong Kong's identity to the outside world.

## Dr Walton Li Wai-tat

**Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa***

Dr Walton Li Wai-tat was presented for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa* in recognition of his contributions to medicine and society.

Dr Li comes from a remarkable medical family with strong connections to the University stretching back nearly a century. He has received much recognition for his work in the advancement of ophthalmology as well as establishing the Department of Ophthalmology at the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital in 1980, after returning from his studies in the United States.

Since 2005, he has been Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Hong Kong Sanatorium and Hospital where his uncle, Dr Li Shu-fan, and then his father, Dr Li Shu-pui, were in charge for more than 80 years.

A great believer in devoting time, effort and money to the education of doctors and nurses, Dr Li is Chairman of the Li Shu Fan Medical Foundation, which was established in 1963 by his uncle, who was the first Minister of Health in Dr Sun Yat-sen's government.

The Foundation has made various donations to the University and over the past nine years, established seven Endowed Professorships at HKU, one of the most notable being the Li Shu-Pui Professorship in Surgery, to commemorate Dr Li's father.


*Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh putting on the cap when Professor Lap-Chee Tsui presented a set of academic gown to him in the Plum Village, the Buddhist retreat he founded in southern France.*

## Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh

**Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa***

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh was presented for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa* in recognition of his contributions to world peace and humanity.

Thich Nhat Hanh, the world-renowned spiritual leader, prolific writer and global peace activist, was born in Vietnam in 1926, became a Buddhist monk at 16 and was fully ordained seven years later.

During the Vietnam War, he was a champion for peace and a key organiser and provider of social services for the needy, prompting American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr to nominate him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967, but also resulting in 29 years of exile after the war in 1973.

Since then he has published more than 100 works on meditation, mindfulness and peace, as well as poems and children's stories, which have become best sellers in Europe and America. In 1982 he founded the Buddhist retreat in southern France known as Plum Village where the Vice-Chancellor was given the warmest of welcomes during his brief visit in March to bestow the honour.

Thich Nhat Hanh's devotion to the work of inner transformation for the benefit of individuals and society through meditation has resulted in him being invited to address the United States Congress, the House of Lords in the United Kingdom and the Irish Parliament. Listed by *TIME* magazine as one of the 'Heroes of Asia', he has also been a frequent visitor to this University where he has given several very popular lectures hosted by the Centre for Buddhist Studies.


*Thich Nhat Hanh, in absentia, presented a video message at the 190th Congregation.*


*A gift given by Thich Nhat Hanh to the University.*


*The title of University Laureate being conferred upon Professor Jao Tsung-I (centre) in recognition of his scholarly achievements.*

## THE INAUGURAL UNIVERSITY LAUREATE

HKU has appointed the world-renowned Sinologist Professor Jao Tsung-I the inaugural University Laureate. Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui presented the title to Professor Jao at the Inaugural University Laureate Presentation Ceremony, held on January 10, with the President of the China Institute of Culture Professor Xu Jialu as the officiating guest.

Established in 2013, the University Laureate is the highest academic honour that HKU can bestow on individuals who have made extraordinary scholarly contributions to the academic world, who have received international acclaim, and, who have been in association, or have committed to be associated, with the University.

Professor Jao's lifelong academic pursuits and his passion for art and culture have earned him a worldwide reputation. His research is broad and diverse, covering history, archaeology, literature, culture, education, religion and art.

His pioneering research on Dunhuang materials has firmly established Dunhuang studies as a major discipline in modern Sinology. Teaching at HKU from 1952 to 1968, Professor Jao has been associated with HKU for more than sixty years. The Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole was established in 2003 with a generous donation by Professor Jao of his collection of over 40,000 books and about 200 of his artworks.


*From left: HKU Chair of Education Professor Cheng Kai-ming, Director of Jao Tsung-I Petite Ecole Professor Lee Chack-fan, Professor Jao Tsung-I, Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui and President of China Institute of Culture Professor Xu Jialu.*

Three variations on the plum blossoms – *Qin and Xiao Duet by Professor Lau Chor-wah (left) and Mr Sou Si-tai (right) on the occasion.*

## HONORARY FELLOWS


Eight distinguished individuals have been awarded Honorary University Fellowships in recognition of their contributions to the University and the community. Below is a brief but by no means comprehensive description of their achievements:

Mrs Annie Liang Bentley, a pioneer in communications, forged a tradition of class reunion philanthropy towards HKU.

Dr Philip Chen Nan-lok, a senior figure in aviation and business, has served on prominent trade bodies and promoted higher education.

Ir Dr Joseph Chow Ming-kuen, a civil and structural engineer, has supported HKU in many capacities and promoted the engineering profession.

Dr David Fang Jinsheng is a respected and accomplished member of the medical profession who is also known for his tenor voice.

Mr Lui Kwan-fat, 'Uncle Fat', served HKU Students' Union for 44 years, many of them as Union Manager.

Professor Saw Swee-hock, Founding Chair of HKU's Department of Statistics, has contributed professionally and financially to tertiary institutions in Hong Kong and the region.

Dr James Wong Sai-wing, mathematician, has spearheaded a business and shared his expertise with HKU and community organisations.

Mrs Carol Yu Louey Kwok-won, social philanthropist, established the Carol Yu Centre for Infection which supports HKU's groundbreaking work in this field.

For more about Honorary University Fellowships, please go to *http://www4.hku.hk/honfellows/*

## ENDOWED PROFESSORS


HKU presented nine new Endowed Professors and four successive appointments in its Eighth Inauguration of Endowed Professorships, officiated by Council Chairman Dr the Honourable Leong Che-hung and presided by Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui in the Grand Hall, Lee Shau Kee Lecture Centre on February 24. The occasion also marked the establishment of a total of 80 Endowed Professorships, including three Distinguished Visiting Professorships, since 2005.

As one of the most significant awards bestowed upon eminent academics within the University to support their academic and research activities, Endowed Professorships, initiated by Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, have been created to bridge academia and generous philanthropists and provide perpetual support to areas of academic excellence.

Each Endowed Professorship is established with a generous donation of HK$10 million or more which is matched by the University with an equal amount. An Advisory Committee has been set up to ensure the appointments are made in accordance with established University procedures. Members of the Committee include Dr Raymond Ch'ien (Chairman), Dr York Liao, Professor Felice Lieh-Mak and Ms Mary Ma.

For more about HKU's Endowed Professorships, please go to *http://www.hku.hk/ephku/*

*Award Presentation Ceremony for*

# Excellence *in* Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

## RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

The outstanding achievements of staff in teaching, research and knowledge exchange were honoured at the University's annual award presentation ceremony on March 26, presided over for the last time by Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, who stepped down from his post at the end of March.

Awards were handed out in seven categories to recognise the breadth and high quality of achievements by both young talent and their more experienced colleagues, at both the University and Faculty levels.

The Pro-Chancellor, Dr the Honourable Sir David Li Kwok-po, was the Guest of Honour and gave the closing address, while Professor Tsui welcomed the recipients.

"Over more than a decade at HKU," Professor Tsui said, "I have had the pleasure of watching gifted teachers and researchers flourish, and I am honoured to be amongst so many exceptional individuals who are working together to achieve excellence for the University and significant benefits for society."

Further information and photos can be found at *http://www.hku.hk/award*

Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

# OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARD

Dedication, creative and tireless effort, and impact on students' learning were the qualities cited by the judging panel of this year's award winners. Six individuals and one team were selected.

## INDIVIDUAL AWARD

### Professor Cheung Wing-sum

*Department of Mathematics*

Mathematics to Professor Cheung is like a kaleidoscope: a place of beauty and colour, and of concepts that cannot be simply pinned down to formulas but rather are grasped intuitively. That imaginative approach to his subject, paired with a down-to-earth enthusiasm, has greatly inspired his students.

"To learn and master mathematics, sense or insight or feeling is more important than sophisticated techniques," he said. "Detailed and rigorous arguments could easily hinder the understanding of the essential idea behind the scene, and blur the flow of thinking. So the core of my teaching is to nurture the sense or insight in mathematics."

He uses layman terms and simple pictures to illustrate abstract concepts, with the aim of getting students to think.

"Professor Cheung's lectures are always clear and inspiring. He explains abstract theorems in such an elegant and creative way," Bo Jiang (BSc 2013) said. "He is humourous and with zero arrogance."

He also connects with his students on a personal level. "Although he is very busy, his door is always open for students, even outside office hours," added current MPhil student Peng Jun.

### Dr Tammy Kwan Yim-lin

*Faculty of Education*

Dr Kwan believes the best teachers are also fearless learners who are constantly pushing the boundaries and willing to step outside their comfort zones to explore new ground. As her students attest, she is an inspiring example of this approach herself.

"I strongly believe a teacher of excellence and a genuine professional needs to be proactive in taking up leadership roles and possess the courage to try innovative practices in both teaching and curriculum design," she said.

Dr Kwan demonstrates those goals by regularly seeking feedback from students on how to make her lessons more interesting and rewarding, said Michelle Kwong (PGDE 2013). "Dr Kwan never presents herself as a person of authority. Instead, she wants and needs her students to realise that she is learning with them at every step of the course."

She also provides a great deal of support for her students, said Julian de Brackinghe (PGDE 2011), who has also done undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in the United Kingdom. "I do not believe I have ever received as much support from a teacher especially at a higher level of education."

### Dr Cole Roskam

*Department of Architecture*

To Dr Roskam, a building is not just a structure, it embodies many different facets of a society. He conveys this all-embracing philosophy to his students, who say they emerge with a stronger understanding of their discipline.

"Helping students understand and appreciate the significance of architecture not merely as physical form, but as a cultural, political, and social construct, deepens their connection to the city while also exposing them to the significance of intercultural understanding, collaboration, and global citizenship," he said.

Ultimately, his aim is for students "to build a sense of intellectual autonomy", and his students testify that he succeeds. Norman Ung (MArch 2012) said: "His courses completely changed my perspectives towards architectural discourse. He questioned the nature of architectural history itself and probed how histories of architecture have been fundamentally constructed."

He also connected personally with students and helped them to progress, according to Lin Yinchun (PhD 2013).

"At the end of the semester, he sent each of us a letter of encouragement and suggestions, helping us to better understand our progress and weaknesses. This feedback greatly improved my reading, thinking, and writing."

### Dr Shih Kaimin

*Department of Civil Engineering*

For Dr Shih, teaching is a privilege and an honour that is all about passing the baton of knowledge on. "What is the purpose of our achievements today if we cannot pass down our newly acquired knowledge and experience to future generations?"

He specialises in environmental sustainability, a new area in the engineering curriculum, and he instills in students his belief that "innovation is key to solving today's sustainability challenges."

He is renowned for bringing humour and unusual ideas to his classroom, and finding exciting ways to turn abstract and difficult concepts into practical and simple forms. Current MSc student Eugenia Cheng Woon-ching recalls worrying that a course on waste management might not be much fun, but finding: "Dr Shih integrated interactive activities and multimedia in class learning – who else would give us assignments of dissembling a real toaster for carbon footprint analysis, and a study trip to landfill!"

His students agree that his teaching methods are unforgettable and highly effective. He is fond of telling them: "If we do not have a simple way to explain a concept, it means we do not understand it enough."

### Ms Dorothy Tang Shun-wai

*Department of Architecture*

While it is important to set students up for success in the classroom, Ms Tang believes that since university is the last safe place for her students to innovate and experiment before they enter into the practice of landscape architecture, unsuccessful attempts are equally rewarding.

"Perhaps students should not be evaluated by the success of their final projects, but rather the process in which they set up the problems and execute solutions," she said. "Even if the ultimate experiment fails, students learn through identifying why the project did not work."

She views experiential learning as a crucial element of her teaching process as "fieldwork exposes students to discrepancies and contradictions between data collected remotely and realities on the ground, necessitating skillful information gathering and decision-making. This prepares students to enter into the profession with discernment, conviction, and confidence to take design risks."

### Dr Yan Xiaojun

*Department of Politics and Public Administration*

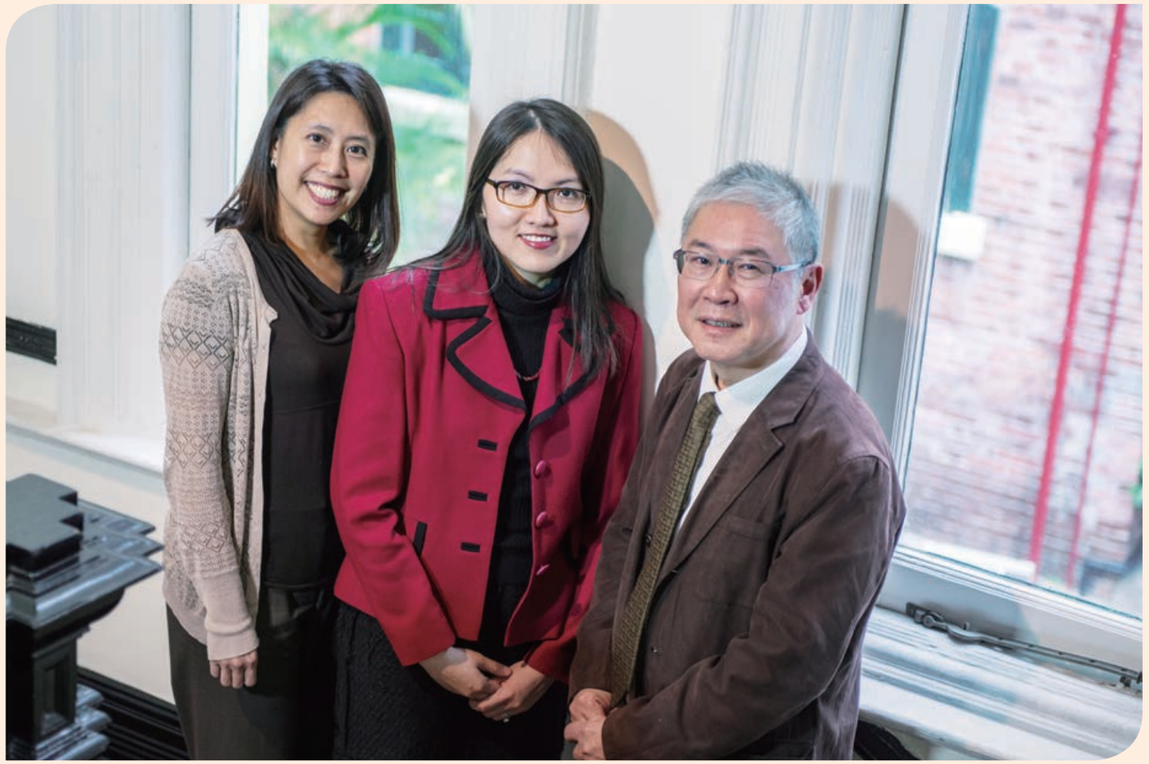
Dr Yan regards university teaching in the 21st century as a "transformative and conversational process, which affords an opportunity to inspire and empower and to learn, both for ourselves and our students."

Inside the classroom, he regularly uses news clips in his lectures to illuminate his concepts and demonstrate to students that politics are everywhere. But he is also a strong advocate of learning through conversation outside of the class, and regularly invites students for discussions in an informal atmosphere.

"He welcomed discussions with students, and did not confine the interactions to intellectual discussion; he also shares his insights on personal growth and character formation," said former student Jeffrey Wong Yin-chun (BSocSc 2010).

Many of his students speak of Dr Yan as an inspiration who mentored them to further studies or careers in politics. "His class is special to me in that it is not the end of a learning process, but an entry inducing me to learn more," said former student Triston Cui Xun (BSocSc 2010). "With Dr Yan's support and encouragement, I chose to work in the United Nations as my first job after graduation."

## TEAM AWARD



From left: **Dr Julie Chen Yun, Dr Janice Tsang Wing-hang and Professor Chan Li-chong, MB Lee Professor in the Humanities and Medicine** (Leader)
*Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine*

Inspiration for the team's award-winning work arose from the realisation that the existing curriculum – like those of most medical schools – focussed very well on medical facts and scientific knowledge but tended to neglect the human side of being a doctor.

With this in mind they developed 'A Medical Humanities Core Curriculum: Engaging Medical Students through Experiential Learning' – which encouraged students not to neglect their interests outside of the medical field so as to remain rounded individuals, and through role play to learn how to connect and empathise with patients.

Students commented that the course was a refreshing change from the more stressful side of being a medical student, such as being bombarded daily with medical facts and learning to deal with suffering and death.

"I enjoyed the programme immensely," said current MBBS student Amanda Hwang Chin, "and I think it will definitely make me a more humanistic doctor and a better doctor in the future. I am truly grateful to the Medical Humanities team for their endeavour in introducing such an unconventional yet desperately needed element to a comprehensive medical education."



## FACULTY TEACHING AWARDS

Faculties have established their own teaching awards to recognise staff who have made outstanding contributions to the enhancement of their students' studies and demonstrated a strong commitment to excellence in teaching.

### Architecture

Professor Rebecca Chiu Lai-har has made a significant contribution to curriculum development and Housing Management programmes in the Urban Planning and Design Department. She scored consistently well in student evaluation and is a strong believer in engaging her students through group projects. Dr Ng Fung-fai's teaching philosophy is based on student-centred learning. He developed a highly effective learning framework for the surveying studio courses and spearheaded innovative reforms in the Real Estate and Construction curriculum.

### Arts

As Director of the new European Studies programme, Dr Carl Vogt has made an important contribution to both teaching and curriculum development. In 2012 he helped establish a teaching and research consortium with other local universities by securing a grant for the European Union Academic Programme, part of which went to enhance European Studies and provide more experiential learning opportunities for students. He has also demonstrated an exemplary commitment to teaching courses and supervising student research.

### Business and Economics

Winners for undergraduate teaching are: Dr Olivia Leung Shek-ling who tailors her teaching strategies to fit the individual needs of her students; and Professor Richard Wong who encourages his students to realise the versatility of economic thinking in the real world. The taught postgraduate teaching winners are: Dr Matthias Buehlmaier for making complicated topics accessible to students, thereby inspiring them to pursue further studies; and Dr Gilbert Wong Yao-yee for constantly striving to update teaching materials for his students so that his courses are always relevant to today.

### Dentistry

In his 18 years with the Faculty, Dr Michael Botelho has dedicated much time to the design and development of the undergraduate curriculum. He is Chairman of the Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committee and sits on the Board of Undergraduate Studies. He has secured grants for teaching innovations in areas including e-Clinical Learning Portfolio, and he plays a leading role in coordinating the design and implementation of 14 Key Skills exercises for dental undergraduates.

### Education

Winner of the individual award was Dr Cheri Chan Yu-yan for her exemplary teaching and dedication to inspiring students to go on to become innovative teachers with a real passion for education. The team award went to Dr Ho Man-wah, Dr Eva Chan Suk-ying and Mr Wong Ka-lok for their excellent and continued contributions to curriculum innovations in liberal studies teacher education.

### Engineering

The individual awards went to Dr Chui Chun-kit, who developed the first self-learning course in the Department of Computer Science and coordinated the implementation of Outcome-based Learning and e-learning there; and Dr Shih Kaimin, who is frequently praised by students for his passion and who pioneered the Environmental Sustainability module. Dr Wilton Fok Wai-tung and his team were jointly awarded for their Sichuan reconstruction project, which provides experiential and service learning and an opportunity to contribute to real-life solutions to students across departments.

### Law

Dr Shahla Ali aims to promote student participation. She is active in curriculum design, has developed three new courses, and has adopted experiential teaching methods and technology for learning. Dr Gu Weixia seeks to create a learning environment for active learners. She has introduced innovative and interactive elements into her teaching and is also active in curriculum design. Ms Vandana Rajwani has reformed advocacy education, incorporating role plays, digital video review, constructive feedback and professional mentoring, and receives consistently positive feedback from students.

### Medicine

Dr Chin Weng-yee is active in curriculum review, renewal and design and in 2013 developed a Common Core course on the meaning of health that was well received by students. She also puts much effort into monitoring, evaluating and assuring the quality of the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery programme. Dr David Lam Chi-leung aims to nurture intuitive learning among students. He developed a new e-learning module through Moodle on chest imaging that received a Teaching Development Grant and very positive feedback from students.

### Science

Professor Aleksandra Djurišić is an outstanding teacher who has put continuous effort into arousing her students' interest in learning, and developing the curriculum. Since joining the Department of Physics in 2003, she has developed eight new courses, including two Common Core courses, and she has helped to implement new pedagogies and improve laboratory teaching. Moreover, she has developed experimental setups for renewable energy-related laboratory experiments that are suitable for non-science students as well as high-school science projects.

### Social Sciences

Dr Travis Kong is passionate about teaching and engaging students, and his goal is for students to understand what they are learning rather than simply reproduce knowledge. He draws on his training in sociology and his research expertise in gender and sexuality to focus on everyday experiences and nurture critical thinking, an appreciation of differences and the integration of theory and practice. He emphasises an interactive, learner-centred approach that uses multimedia and promotes student creativity.

Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

## OUTSTANDING RESEARCHER AWARD

Academic staff who have produced exceptional research of international merit are honoured with this award, which includes HK$250,000 to further their research.

### Professor Lu Liwei

*Department of Pathology*

Professor Lu, who joined HKU in 2000 and is Professor of Immunology, is internationally recognised for his work on autoimmunity, in particular his work on rheumatoid arthritis, a crippling disease.

His laboratory was among the first to successfully treat autoimmune arthritis by targeting the cytokine B-cell activating factor in a preclinical study in which the development of arthritis was successfully suppressed in mice. His ultimate goal is to achieve balance in the immune system.

"If we are able to do this, we will be able to fight against infectious disease as well as other types of autoimmune diseases," he said. "We believe our developed techniques will be used for treating other autoimmune diseases in future."

Although Professor Lu has published more than 100 peer-reviewed papers in leading immunology and rheumatology journals, and received numerous awards including the Croucher Senior Research Fellowship in 2012, he takes a very humble approach to his work.

"Scientific research should be pursued with dedication as well as passion. Inner peace is also very important. Research should not be driven by fame or any material benefit," he said.

### Professor Shen Shunqing

*Department of Physics*

To Professor Shen, the beauty of physics lies in its ability to provide simple yet elegant explanations. He likens it to a game played with smooth black and white stones. "We can use very simple ideas to understand complicated phenomena in nature," he said.

His research field is in condensed matter physics, in particular understanding the electrical and magnetic properties of materials at the level of electrons. Recently his team has pioneered a new field that is a synergy of topology, physics and material science, and he has been the first to publish a unified theory to describe topological materials in various forms.

The importance of his work is evident in the field of electronics where devices are being made increasingly smaller and new materials are needed to contain them. He is particularly interested in the potential of 'spintronics' and has developed equations to help explain it. "Nature has the properties of spin, it is like a spinning top. I think in future a spin current may be used to replace electrical currents in electronic devices," he said.



Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

OUTSTANDING RESEARCHER AWARD

### Professor Wang Wenping

*Department of Computer Science*

Professor Wang is interested in geometry, in particular its ability to help us create and visualise things through geometric computing, computer graphics, and data visualisation.

It is an interest that earned him a State Scientific and Technological Progress Award (second class) in 2010 and that has seen him make fundamental contributions to computational algebraic geometry, shape modelling, mesh generation and architectural geometry.

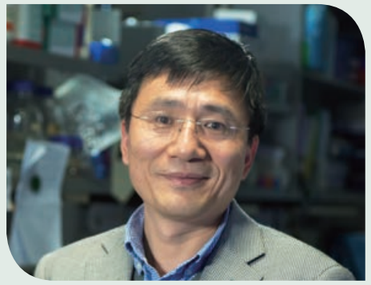
The latter is a field that is increasingly reliant on highly complex graphic input. "Many modern architects use free-form surfaces or wavy forms to define roofs and facades. Our research in architecture geometry asks how to design such surfaces and how to make them easy to manufacture," he said.

The water environment is another area of focus. His team has developed a data visualisation system for water environments that provides forecasting and other information that is useful to decision-makers and engineers, and that also helps the public to better understand their environment. "We hope our technology can be extended to the Greater China area and contribute to environmental protection there," he said.

Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

## OUTSTANDING RESEARCH STUDENT SUPERVISOR AWARD

This award honours effort and success in helping to guide students towards research excellence. The winner receives HK$25,000 and a research postgraduate studentship.



### Professor Sun Hongzhe

*Department of Chemistry*

As a recipient of the National Natural Science Foundation of China Outstanding Young Scholar Award (2005), a Croucher Senior Research Fellowship (2010–2011), and the HKU Outstanding Researcher Award (2009–2010), Professor Sun knows what it takes to succeed in research. He is passing his insights on to research students through a simple formula.

"Provide them with encouragement, stimulation and training," he said. Students are encouraged to do research at the frontier and aim for excellence, stimulated to keep going and find new ways of looking at their work, and provided with comprehensive training to help them succeed.

PhD student Angel Lai said: "He has a free style of supervising. He gave me guidelines and pointed me to the area I should explore, then he let me go for it. I found unexpected results that made my story more interesting. His style is very good and even though it's a free style, his expectations are very high."

Professor Sun added: "The numerous awards and prizes my students have received over the years and their postgraduate successes have given me much satisfaction."

Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

# OUTSTANDING YOUNG RESEARCHER AWARD

This award honours young scholars who are at Associate Professor rank or below and have produced high-quality, internationally recognised research. Recipients each receive HK$150,000 per year for two years and a research postgraduate studentship.

## Mr Thomas Cheng Kin-hon

*Department of Law*

Fair competition is very important to Mr Cheng, whether at play or at work. "In life we need rules so that we can operate on a level playing field," he said. "In the economy, firms need rules and regulations so they can compete fairly with each other." Further, he has long been drawn to areas where law and economics intersect. Given all these factors, competition law became an obvious choice of professional and academic focus.

His particular research interest is competition law in developing countries. "One of the most common problems for developing countries is price-fixing by multinationals."

He tries to use his research to benefit Hong Kong and says the most exciting part of his academic career so far was being involved in developing Hong Kong's newly introduced competition legislation, and now playing a role in enforcing the law as a member of the Competition Commission.

"I hope it will provide a healthier and fairer competition environment for firms in Hong Kong," he said.

## Dr Liu Zhonghui

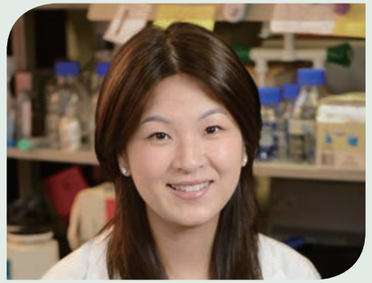
*Department of Earth Sciences*

Dr Liu is not the first scientist to understand that studying the past is the key to knowing the future, but, given current fascination with anticipated anthropogenic climate change, his work is particularly valuable.

His area of expertise is in reading hidden climate change information in rocks and sediment and recognising rhythms of natural climate variability beyond the historical period.

"My interest is in climate change on different time scales – ranging from the last 1,000 years to much older times such as 40 or 50 million years ago," he said. Dr Liu focusses on characteristic warm periods in the geological past, to understand the chain of climatic responses and potential driving mechanisms that would have maintained a warmer climate, including the role of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide) in global climate change.

His work takes him around the world – collecting samples from places as different as deep in the north Atlantic Ocean, to remote parts of China. Smiling, he said the compounds he finds "are like diamonds to me", and he sincerely hopes his research will itself stand the test of time.



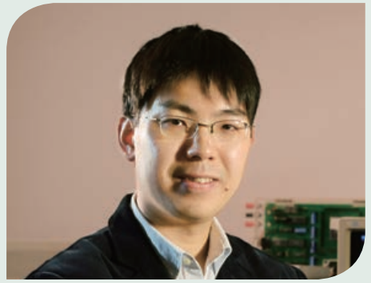
## Dr Stephanie Ma Kwai-yee

*Department of Anatomy*

Since completing her PhD at HKU in 2007, Dr Ma's work has focussed on cancer stem cells, using liver and esophageal cancer model systems as her primary research focus. Her work on liver cancer stem cells has been most fruitful in recent years, and it is her sincere hope that her findings can one day be translated from bench to bedside and contribute to the improvement of therapies for these diseases.

Dr Ma has published more than 35 papers during her time at HKU, and is listed among the top one per cent of most cited scholars by the ISI's Essential Science Indicators. She has also won many awards including the 2007 Li Ka Shing Prize for the Best PhD Thesis (HKU) and 2008 Hong Kong Young Scientist Award in Life Sciences from the Hong Kong Institution of Science.

Looking upon cancer research not as a job but as an integral part of her life, Dr Ma believes that successful scientific pursuit should naturally be driven by curiosity, motivation, determination and the quest for knowledge.



## Dr Wu Yik-chung

*Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering*

Dr Wu works in one of the most exciting and fastest-moving fields of technology – that of wireless communications. 25 years ago, hardly anyone had a mobile phone. Today nearly everyone has a smartphone. The work of engineers such as Dr Wu to improve the way that communications travel to and from devices over networks has made a critical contribution to modern living.

Dr Wu, who completed his Bachelor and Master degrees at HKU, focusses on modelling uncertainty in wireless systems and investigating optimal decisions under uncertainty. He has drawn on advanced mathematical tools to pioneer a number of techniques for transmitter and receiver designs that have made wireless communication more reliable and efficient.

"My research requires me to extract the meanings behind mathematics and match it to the real world. When I find a good match, I see the beauty in it," he said.

His work has been published in top journals and also attracted interest from the wireless industry, including the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute and the communications giant Huawei Technology Limited.

## Dr Yao Wang

*Department of Physics*

Dr Yao likens research to hiking on an unknown hiking trail. "You don't know where it will lead to, you just stake it step by step. Sometimes the sea is there, sometimes it is hidden in the fog. Perseverance is the key." He has taken many steps in his young career.

Dr Yao, who received his PhD in 2006 and joined HKU in 2008, was one of the first two recipients of the Croucher Innovation Award in 2013. He and his team focus on the degree of internal freedom in electrons, which has potential for providing new concepts in electronics and information processing.

His theoretical predictions on valley pseudospin in particular have been observed by many experimental groups and are having a high impact internationally. Previously it was thought valley pseudospin would be unusable, but his work makes this possible in newly emerged two-dimensional materials.

"Physics to me is to understand the laws of nature and make use of them to change our lives," he said. "I hope our discovery can eventually lead to faster and more energy-efficient electronics for future information technologies."

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# RESEARCH OUTPUT PRIZE

This Faculty-based award recognises the best pieces of research published or created in the preceding calendar year by an individual or team. Award winners receive HK$120,000 to further their research.

## Architecture

Providing an affordable and viable alternative to generic housing in rural villages in northern China is an ongoing problem. After extensive research into the living conditions in rural villages and the development of rural sustainable technologies, a team led by Mr John Lin Chun-han designed and constructed 'House for All Seasons', the prototype for a new rammed earth house typology. Well received by the international community, the project won the prestigious *Architectural Review* House Award 2012.

## Arts

In her award-winning book *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Botany: The Salutary Science*, Dr Alexandra Cook argues that the 18th century philosopher, writer and composer was also a leading figure in the emerging science of botany. Her research has revealed that he taught a pioneering natural method of plant classification, not an outmoded artificial system, as previously believed. The book has been praised as an invaluable scholarly resource and won the 2013 John Thackray Medal of the Society for the History of Natural History (London).

## Business and Economics

In the article 'Did Subjectivity Play a Role in CDO Credit Ratings?', Professor John Griffin and Dr Tang Yongjun explained a critical driver in the 2007–2008 global financial crisis, the credit ratings of collateralised debt obligations (CDOs). Approaching the subject from both academic and public policy perspectives, they made the important finding that a top credit rating agency frequently inflated CDO credit ratings, and that this inflation resulted in too many seemingly safe securities and was harmful to subsequent market performance. Their work has influenced in part the United States Department of Justice's investigation of the rating agency.

## Dentistry

Having already discovered the *in-vitro* antifungal activity of purpurin, Dr Tsang Wai-kei, Dr Hennaka Mudiyanselage Herath Nihal Bandara and Professor Fong Wing-ping extended the mechanical studies of the pigment on *Candida* biofilms and morphogenesis. Their findings, in 'Purpurin Suppresses *Candida Albicans* Biofilm Formation and Hyphal Development', demonstrated that, at sub-lethal doses, purpurin blocked yeast-to-hyphal transition and inhibited biofilm development, as well as down-regulating expression of hypha-specific genes and the hyphal reglulator *RAS1*. This suggests purpurin may represent a novel potential antifungal candidate with clinical relevance.

## Education

A six-strong team sought to provide research-based evidence on how the quality of early childhood education effects child outcomes in a low resource level Asian country. The resulting paper 'Is Something Better than Nothing? An Evaluation of Early Childhood Programs in Cambodia', compared differences in development between children who attended preschool programmes of varying quality and those who had no access to such services. A main finding was that while some types of preschool are better than others, any preschool is better than none at all. The study has prompted a change in government policy in Cambodia.

## Engineering

A discovery that boosts the power conversion efficiency of organic solar cells has received widespread acclaim and been cited over 200 times, including by a Nobel Laureate. Dr Wallace Choy Chik-ho and his team were the first to propose and demonstrate dual plasmonic metal nanostructures that were simultaneously incorporated into the cells to improve their light trapping and light absorption. The cells reached nine per cent power conversion efficiency, one of the highest rates seen to date.

## Law

Are courts justified to consider the government as an expert? That question was asked by Miss Cora Chan Sau-wai, who showed that in an era of human rights it was no longer acceptable for the courts to take the government on trust. Her article on the matter showed the inadequacy of judicial preference in the United Kingdom and offered a way forward, but it is also relevant to jurisdictions that have some form of constitutional rights review, including Hong Kong.

## Medicine

A non-invasive innovation for treating the spinal deformity, scoliosis, in children offers hope as an alternative to repeated invasive surgery. Professor Kenneth Cheung Man-chee led the research, which is the first in-human study to magnetically control growing rods in patients rather than use surgery to do so. The study was reported in *The Lancet* and picked up by more than 100 media outlets. Spinal surgeons from around the world have also visited Hong Kong to learn about this procedure.

## Science

New findings on the relationship between temperature and biodiversity are adding to our understanding about the potential impacts of global warming. Research led by Dr Moriaki Yasuhara looked at the links between diversity, latitude and temperature and how these have affected biodiversity. While the link between diversity and latitude has changed over time, that between diversity and temperature has remained remarkably constant over the past three million years, suggesting species diversity responds to temperature change on ecological time scales.

## Social Sciences

One of the most heavily studied variables in social psychology is the locus of control (LOC). The current Western view adopts a universal perspective on the beneficial role of a sense of control on mitigating psychological symptoms. But a meta-analysis led by Professor Cecilia Cheng of studies conducted over the last 50 years challenges that assumption. It finds cultural values have differing influences on the relationship between LOC and psychological symptoms. The work will have profound implications for therapeutic psychology.



Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research & Knowledge Exchange 2013

# KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AWARD

The Faculty Knowledge Exchange (KE) Award recognises outstanding accomplishments which have tangibly benefited the community, business/industry or partner organisations. Winners receive HK$50,000 to further their KE efforts.

## Architecture

Mr Jason Carlow led the Faculty of Architecture's involvement in creating eight installations for ArtAlive@Park 2010 and ArtAlive@Park 2012. Both students and staff explored new ideas about architecture, fabrication and public space. Their installations served as highly accessible public art and design works, and demonstrated alternative ideas about public space and architecture to government officials. The success of the 2010 project inspired the Leisure and Cultural Services Department to remodel the ArtAlive@Park programme based on HKU's projects and to involve other local university architecture programmes.

## Arts

Language and communication in genetic counselling is the focus of work by Dr Olga Zayts in the School of English, who has looked at counselling for prenatal (Down's Syndrome), postnatal (G6PD deficiency) and adolescent and adult (Sudden Arrhythmia Death Syndrome) conditions. The achievements by Dr Zayts and her team in developing healthcare communication practice and resources are recognised by the Consortium on Clinical Genetics and Genomic Medicine, which has a five-year plan to enhance diagnostic and counselling services to clients in Hong Kong.

## Business and Economics

Dr Michael Chau Chiu-lung applied his expertise in data analysis and data mining to help the Hong Kong Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service (BTS) detect patterns in blood donations of the past, and identify where it could boost donations. On Dr Chau's recommendations, the BTS opened a donation centre in Yuen Long in 2011 which attracted more than 400 donations per week, mostly from people living in the district. This project has enhanced a vital service in public healthcare.

## Dentistry

A project to promote oral health in preschool children has addressed an unmet need: children receive free dental care services once they enter school aged six, but not before. The project, led by Dr Yang Yanqi, educated parents and kindergarten staff about breaking bad habits and establishing good oral hygiene and offered dental services to children. Antenatal and postnatal women were also targeted with information on baby oral health education. The hope is to prevent problems before they arise.

## Education

Best teaching practice is being promoted to schools through a DVD project that demonstrates innovative and engaging teaching methods. The DVD is produced under the School-University Partnerships programme led by Dr Tammy Kwan Yim-lin and features authentic lessons by student-teachers. Schools have said it has been a useful resource for staff development for both novice and experienced staff. The project illustrates how student-teachers can be an important bridge between schools and tertiary institutions, and promote the professional development of teachers.

## Engineering

Dr Chow Kam-pui has worked for 10 years with the police force and the Customs and Excise Department to develop technologies to fight cyberspace crime in Hong Kong. During that time he and his team have developed three systems – Lineament I, which deals with suspected infringement of intellectual property rights over the internet; Lineament II, which uses cybercriminal profiling and artificial intelligence to detect potential auction fraud; and Lineament III, which analyses suspected criminal intent in the cyberlocker. Each of them has won praise from government departments for enhancing cyber safety.

## Law

The Human Rights Portal developed by Professor Simon Young Ngai-man and his team in the Centre for Comparative and Public Law has filled the need for a user-friendly website providing information on human rights in Asia, and focussing on the research done by HKU and others in this field. The website (*http://www.law.hku.hk/hrportal/*) is a unique and easily accessible source of information for government and policy-making institutes, NGOs and academics, as well as for members of the public interested in human rights issues.

## Medicine

Advances in the treatment of blood cancers and diseases are being made all the time, but keeping up with the latest can be difficult for hard-working doctors. To solve this problem, Professor Kwong Yok-lam and his team set up the Haematology Protocol, using online technology to disseminate information on the latest research in medical management and treatments for these diseases. The first such unified protocol in Hong Kong, the multimedia offering includes a website, handbook, iPhone application and newsletter and since its launch has been regularly accessed by medical practitioners as well as patients around the world.

## Science

Hong Kong is known as the Pearl of the Orient, but Dr Jason Pun Chun-shing of the Department of Physics feels that in terms of light pollution, the city may be shining a little too brightly. He set up the Hong Kong Night Sky Monitoring Network in 2010 to measure the brightness of our night skies, and discovered that Hong Kong's urban skies are 33 times brighter than rural skies on average. Dr Pun is discussing the findings with professional bodies and the Government to come up with possible mitigating measures to combat this pollution.

## Social Sciences

Dr Uwe Steinhoff's writings on the ethics of war, terrorism and torture have challenged conventional opinion and double standards, stimulated discussion beyond the confines of academia, and contributed to a less biased understanding of these controversial issues. His work considers the circumstances, if ever, when war, terrorism and torture may be justified. Apart from being discussed in the public arena, his work has also been cited and included in the curricula of military training institutes.

# AMBITIONS IN ARCHITECTURE

In his first year, the new Dean of Architecture Professor Chris Webster brought multiple projects, ambitious ideas and a new unity to the Faculty.

"Within five years I would like to have created a new kind of Architecture and Urbanism school that universities around the world will take note of and aspire to emulate."

Inspiring words from the new Dean of Architecture Professor Chris Webster, who joined the Faculty in May 2013, from Cardiff University where he headed Britain's top City Planning school and directed the UK Centre for Education in the Built Environment. It was a job he thought he would never leave. Then came the call from Hong Kong.

"HKU's Faculty of Architecture has the best collection of departments of its kind in Asia, and one of the best collection of subjects under one roof anywhere in the world," said Professor Webster. "The calibre of staff is high, the students are outstanding and we are located at the epicentre of 21st century urbanisation. Where else would I want to be?

"The five departments separately do great work and already have solid reputations around the world. Where I see potential is in helping them do good work together as well – the industry today wants people who can cross boundaries. We have a relatively young staff, a malleable structure, strong links with industry and a chance to build something uniquely synergistic that most Built Environment faculties know is needed but few can deliver on."

Professor Webster's links with HKU are many and date back to 1987 when he gave the first overseas lecture of his career at a conference here, in the Main Building.

## Spontaneous and planned

"I like Hong Kong as a city, not least because it's a genuine mix of the spontaneous and the planned," he said. "It's been my life's academic work to understand this paradox – how do you design the spontaneous, plan for surprise, manage complex self-organisation? I guess in coming here I'm putting my money – and my family and reputation – where my mouth is."

Five new projects already underway indicate the direction of travel under Dean Webster's leadership. The first brings the Faculties of Architecture and Medicine together – "putting HKU at the centre of international efforts to unravel the relationships between urban design and individual health."

Projects two and three will expand the Faculty of Architecture on both arts and science fronts. "Within a year we hope to be building our own Architectural Gallery in the Knowles Building, which along with our Shanghai Study Centre Gallery, will be a major venue for student and professional design exhibitions from around the world," he said.

Funding has also been secured for a state-of-the-art HKUrban iLab – home for all kinds of urban computational work including the Faculty's Geographical Information Science (GIS), Building Information Modelling (BIM), parametric design and urban econometrics research. An iLab grand-challenge-style project that Professor Webster is currently drawing support for in the city is 'Walkable HK' – a project to produce the world's most advanced analytical 3D urban pedestrian model, "with the objective of working with government agencies and the development industry to make Hong Kong the most walkable city in the world".

## Shaping Burma

Professor Webster is reaching overseas too, with a three-year Global Citizenship Overseas Learning and Service Programme in Burma. "Four groups of students – landscapists, architects, conservationists and urban planners – will each year go to Yangon, and work with local counterparts to help make a difference to the way the city takes shape at this critical moment in history," he explains. "The city is set to take off economically, and we are readying ourselves to help conserve its unique heritage quarters, to transfer low-carbon design technology and to offer approaches to eco-sensitive urban growth strategies. I would like all of our students to be a part of this."

And finally – for now – he is working to secure funding for the next phase of the Faculty's Shanghai Study Centre (SSC). "We're hoping to develop the SSC more fully into 'the place to be in China' for international and Chinese architects, urban planners and other urban scholars: a gallery for leading American, European and Asian architecture schools to display their best work, lecture hall and design studios for international collaborative student work, and a place to bring artists and scientists together to explore the power of creativity techniques."

By the end of May 2014, a year after arriving, Professor Webster will have launched a re-branded Faculty under the new name HKUrbanLab.

"Both my Faculty and leaders of the architecture, planning, landscape and surveying professions in Hong Kong have given me their full and enthusiastic backing for this, which they see as a signal of a new and exciting way of doing things." This is important, as another of his aims is to bring the Faculty and the professions together in a much closer, mutually beneficial relationship.

> "We have a relatively young staff, a malleable structure, strong links with industry and a chance to build something uniquely synergistic."
>
> *Professor Chris Webster*

Describing his career as a "life-long devotion to understanding and shaping cities", Professor Webster said his interest came from growing up in London, one of the world's great historical metropolises. It was in the 1970s, a time of oil price rises, power cuts, miners' strikes and dismal architecture and planning, that he had his own light-bulb moment about his home city and his future career; inspired by a high-school lecture about the first phase of London Dockland redevelopment.

That led him to take degrees in urban planning, economic geography, computing mathematics and economics, from whence he embarked on a research quest that uses computational spatial economic models to unlock the 'DNA' of cities. He has taught and researched at Cardiff University, Cambridge University and Universiti Tecnologi Malaysia.

Summing up his aims for the Faculty: "I would like to see it move from very good to excellent. From top in Asia to one of the best in the world – a preferred choice to University College London, Cambridge, Harvard etc, because it has what they have but it's also at the heart of the greatest urbanisation phenomenon in the history of civilisation…" ■


*A delegation, of which Professor Chris Webster (centre in the back row) is one of the members, from HKU's Ronald Coase Centre for Property Rights Research visited Professor Ronald Coase in Chicago in June, 2013.*

*As part of the Global Citizenship Overseas Learning and Service Programme in Burma, Professor Webster visited a Myanmar institute in November, 2013.*

# INFORMING POLICY ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The Government is using research expertise provided by the Faculty of Education to help formulate its new legislation on Early Childhood Education.

Early Childhood Education (ECE) has become a key focus area for the Faculty of Education, which is active in postgraduate training in early childhood and is doing innovative research that has informed government policy in different parts of the world.

At the heart of that matter now is a possible change to current local policy – under which children in Hong Kong receive 12 years of free education – to 15 years of free education, three of which would be kindergarten. At present, children are entitled to kindergarten education, for which they can get government support via a voucher system.

A Committee on Free Kindergarten Education has been newly formed to advise the Government on this issue. Professor Nirmala Rao, Serena HC Yang Professor in Early Childhood Development and Education, is a member of the committee. She and her colleague Dr Li Hui are members of two of its five sub-committees.

## Evidence-based decisions

"The Committee and sub-committees have a broad membership including representatives from schools, the Education Commission and parent groups," said Professor Rao. "Our role on the committees is to provide advice based on research findings – our own, and the work of other experts from around the world – to inform policy, enabling committees to make evidence-based decisions."

> "We are also putting strong emphasis on the importance of play. We are recommending that Early Childhood Education is more play-based and less academic."
>
> *Professor Nirmala Rao*

*The sought-after international forum on kindergarten education held in the Grand Hall was attended by experts from Europe and Asian region.*


*A parent seminar on kindergarten education was held last October.*

The Faculty also contributes research to influence policy on pedagogy. "The Faculty is strong in language teaching, particularly how to teach language in the early years," she said, "and we are also putting strong emphasis on the importance of play. We are recommending that ECE is more play-based and less academic – a more holistic approach."

Hong Kong's policy on ECE until now has not been great in terms of spending, but good in terms of access to services for all. "There are kindergartens everywhere, everyone can go and because of the Government's voucher system there is no financial barrier to entry," Professor Rao explains, adding it is not the availability of kindergartens that is the problem, it is the quality. "One of the main aims under the new policy would be to ensure that the quality of ECE is excellent across the board."

HKU is making a strong contribution to ensuring that quality by training future teachers and leaders in the field. The Faculty introduced the first Master of Education in ECE in Hong Kong, a Postgraduate Diploma of Education in the subject in 2007. "We currently have four full-time academic staff and 12 doctoral students specialising in ECE", said Professor Rao.

## Laying the foundation for learning

"ECE is the foundation for all later learning. What happens at this stage is crucial. When it comes to educating the educators in ECE, the Faculty places emphasis on teaching them to be very aware of individual differences between children," she said. ECE educators must have qualities unique to this area of teaching, including learning to work well with parents. Because the students are so very young, the teachers have to become advocates for the children.

In line with HKU's stated drive to enhance Knowledge Exchange – one of the three strategic themes of the University's Strategic Development – the Faculty has continually taken the initiative in organising seminars and workshops not only for those involved in the education industry, but also for parents.

HKU organised an international forum on kindergarten education and a parent seminar for the Education Bureau in October 2013. Experts from Paris, the United States and United Kingdom, as well as from the Asian region, Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore, spoke at the two events, which were both oversubscribed.

The forum filled the new Grand Hall on the Centennial Campus. Professor Rao lectured on striving for excellence in kindergarten teaching in Hong Kong, while others covered subjects including brain research and early learning and supporting early language learning.

Two other workshops organised last year were equally popular. 'Nurturing Your Children's Creativity and Talent Development: Some Practical Tips for Parents and Teachers', was held in February, while 'Early Years Education Conference' in March had the theme 'Promoting Language and Literacy in Early Childhood: Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice'. Topics included managing the trilingual child in the classroom and fun methods to engage students in learning new vocabulary.

Parents in Hong Kong are renowned for being closely involved in their children's education. "Ensuring them that we can provide their children with the right start through quality ECE across the board is crucial," said Professor Rao. "The Committee will finalise its report in 2015, then the Government will decide on ECE policy based on our recommendations." ■

*Professor Rao with her PhD students in Early Childhood Education.*

# THE DARK BEGINNINGS OF COMMUNIST CHINA

Drawing largely on Communist Party archives, historian Frank Dikötter reveals that the first decade under Mao was not the 'golden age' commonly portrayed, but a period of broken promises and calculated violence.

*A grief-stricken woman stands amid the ruins of a village just north of Caolaoji, Anhui province, destroyed by fighting during the civil war.*

Mao Zedong famously proclaimed that "a revolution is not a dinner party… [it] is an insurrection, an act of violence in which one class overthrows another." *The Tragedy of Liberation: A History of the Chinese Revolution 1945–1957*, a new book by Chair Professor of Humanities Frank Dikötter which has recently been shortlisted for the Orwell Prize, vividly illustrates what that has meant on the ground.

Professor Dikötter has dug deep into county and provincial archives and, similar to his previous work, *Mao's Great Famine*, which won the 2011 BBC Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction, he has written a history about people of all walks of life and their experiences of liberation.

*An alleged landlord facing a People's Tribunal minutes before being executed by a shot to the back in a village in Guangdong in July, 1952.*

The first years under Communist Party rule was characterised by violence and random denunciations, all signposting the atrocities to come during the famine and the Cultural Revolution.

"These early years were not so much the golden age that even some critics of communism have portrayed, but rather one of systematic violence and calculated terror," he said.

"Take the example of land reform. I no longer call it land reform because land was distributed in Japan, Korea and Taiwan during precisely the same years, about 1947–1952, without a drop of blood having been shed. Whereas in the People's Republic of China (PRC), when 'land reform' starts all the way up north in 1947 and gradually unfolds with the conquest of the country by the Communists, it leads to 1.5 million to 2 million people losing their lives."

## Killing quotas and denunciations

In 1950 the Party prescribed an arbitrary 'killing quota' of one per 1,000 people, to eliminate spies, counterrevolutionaries, landlords and other enemies of the regime. Some provinces decided to go one better and raise their quotas. In Guizhou they killed three per 1,000.

Denunciations were actively encouraged regardless of the age or background of targets or the evidence. In Yunnan, an anonymous denunciation that resulted in children as young as eight being arrested was overturned a year later by the Party. In Guangdong about one-third of those persecuted were later declared to be innocent.

"That must surely qualify not just as violence but as terror in the sense that it is not carefully targeted but it is blind. It can hit anybody at any time," Professor Dikötter said.

Most of the executions were carried out in public and many people were at some point pressured or coerced to watch them, even to participate in them, thus binding their fate to the Party.

"It seems to me that the Government wanted everyone in the villages to have blood on their hands, everybody had to participate in these mass denunciation meetings so all of them would be afraid of the return of the old order. Once they had been implicated in the ritual murder of a few, they were tied to the Communist Party," he said.

"These are not discrete episodes. They are part of a cycle of violence. Liberation, the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, all of it is intrinsically linked. People know each other in these villages and memories go all the way back to the founding years of the PRC. Of course it's also a self-fulfilling prophecy. The more the state represses, executes or sends people to the gulag, the more opponents it creates. So when it says it's constantly fighting counterrevolutionaries, it's probably true. The Party becomes afraid of its own shadow."

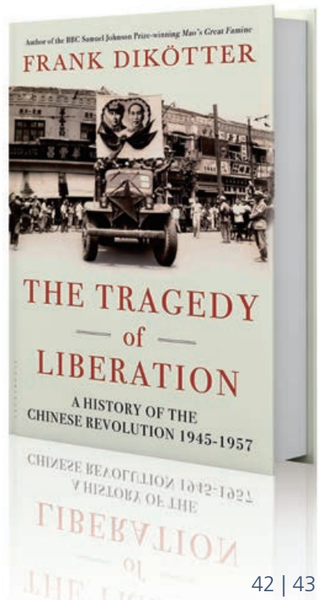
> "It seems to me that the Government wanted everyone in the villages to have blood on their hands, everybody had to participate in these mass denunciation meetings so all of them would be afraid of the return of the old order."
>
> *Professor Frank Dikötter*

## The tragedy itself

The period is also marked by what Professor Dikötter sees as its most disturbing legacy: the curtailment of basic freedoms and dismantling of civil society as the Party moves to control most aspects of people's lives, even their thoughts as adults are sent to evening classes to learn the new orthodoxy and become what the regime called 'New People'. By 1957 people are compelled to examine not only their own thoughts but those of family members, and denounce them if necessary.

"Whether or not the Great Leap Forward or the liberation of China was carried out with the best of intentions, as some claim, ultimately doesn't really matter. What matters is that once you start restricting basic freedoms, it has all sorts of unintended side effects. The tragedy of liberation is that everything was subsumed by the state in the name of the greater good."

His next book will look at the Cultural Revolution. "I'm glad I am doing it this way because I cannot see how you can write about the Cultural Revolution without understanding not only those foundation years but Mao's Great Famine as well," he said. ■



Disaster victims flee the fires engulfing Tokyo.

# DISASTER AS AGENT OF CHANGE

A book about the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake in Japan focusses both on how people dealt with an unprecedented disaster and also with the challenges and opportunities that reconstruction unleashed.

The 7.9 earthquake of September 1, 1923 and the fires it sparked killed 105,000 individuals and burned 45 per cent of Tokyo. In his book, Professor Charles Schencking, Professor and Chairperson of the Department of History, explores how the calamity rattled people's anxieties about modern life and compelled elites to re-examine the trajectory of Japanese society. Many believed that the disaster created a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to not only rebuild Tokyo, but also to reconstruct Japan. Such optimism was not unsurprising.

Overnight, fires consumed 33 million square metres of Tokyo. "It's difficult for people to comprehend such destruction," said Professor Schencking. To assist, he tells his students, "Imagine spending the night in the New Territories and returning to Hong Kong Island only to find the entire Western, Central and Wan Chai districts, and just over half of the Eastern district reduced to ash and rubble."

He reflects that researching and writing the book altered his approach to history. "I trained as a political and economic historian who privileged elite-level sources. This topic led me to delve into the everyday lives of countless Tokyoites and to document how this calamity turned their worlds upside down." Such a focus enabled him to craft a great story: "history from the ground up as well as from the top down."

Completing his book in 2011, Professor Schencking found fascinating parallels between Japan's 1923 and 2011 earthquake experiences. In 1923 the disaster prompted people to reflect on many aspects of life – science, religion, lifestyle and politics as well as on more obvious topics such as death, mourning and planning a new city. Moreover, many believed the disaster created an opportunity to forge a new Japan. Following the 2011 Tōhoku catastrophe many Japanese likewise shared this sense of 'disaster as agent of change'.

The remains of once bustling Kanda Ward, Tokyo.

> "My research interests are evolving, moving from national history to international but still with disasters, humanitarian relief, and everyday people in mind."
>
> *Professor Charles Schencking*

A lithograph print illustrating the spread of fire around the 12-storey tower in Asakusa Park and Hanayashiki.

## Panic and pandemonium

But one key difference exists, namely how people reacted immediately following each calamity. "People panicked after the 1923 disaster and Tokyo descended into pandemonium," said Professor Schencking. This frightened government officials and soon after they implemented policies geared toward disaster preparedness that continues today. Results were seen in 2011. Many commentators remarked on the stoicism, calmness, and resilience exhibited by Japanese in the wake of the Tōhoku disaster.

He is now working on two related research projects. First is a pictorial history of the Great Kantō Earthquake which he hopes will be published by Hong Kong University Press in 2015. Professor Schencking's research uncovered a rich cache of visual materials including artwork, sketches, prints, and postcards – some of which included ghoulish pictures of the dead and scenes of total destruction.

There also exists a collection of colourful lithograph prints dramatically depicting the calamity. One print documents fires engulfing the city as people flee, while another highlights the destruction of the 12-storey tower in Asakusa and the entertainment quarters of Hanayashiki which housed a famous circus. The elephant in the print (as shown in the above picture), Professor Schencking confirms, survived.

Second, is a new book, entitled *America's Tsunami of Aid – Compassion, Opportunism and Delusion following the Great Kantō Earthquake*, for which he has received handsome Research Grants Council funding. It not only documents how much money America gave to Japan following this disaster – more than all other nations combined – but it also examines why America's response was so generous at a time when relations between both countries had become increasingly estranged. Many people gave out of a true sense of compassion. "Humanitarian aid, however," he cautions, "can often be political." Indeed, money came from unusual sources including local Ku Klux Klan chapters and also from anti-Japanese groups who wanted to see Tokyo rebuilt rather than risk an influx of Japanese immigrants.

"It's another way in which people believed a natural disaster could be used to fundamentally change something larger: this time soothing increasingly tense diplomatic relations between both countries." But the notion that disasters can change everything is "sometimes chimerical" he warns. Goodwill created by the United States' assistance evaporated in 1924 when America passed the Oriental Exclusion Law ending all further Japanese emigration to the United States. In Japan, an overwhelming sense of disillusionment with America emerged.

His new research project will take Professor Schencking back to Japan but also to a multitude of archives in America. "My research interests are evolving," he concludes, "moving from national history to international but still with disasters, humanitarian relief, and everyday people in mind."

*The Great Kantō Earthquake and the Chimera of National Reconstruction in Japan* is published by Columbia University Press and Hong Kong University Press. ■


# HASHTAG HAEMATOLOGY

Online Haematology Protocol becomes the go-to reference platform for doctors and patients from around the world.

The question was straightforward – at a time when research into blood cancers and diseases is constantly advancing, is there a way haematology experts can share the latest advances and developments swiftly and in a highly accessible and easily updateable format?

The answer was yes, using online technology, and the result was the Haematology Protocol Summit launched in 2012, the first unified protocol – in the form of iPhone application, online website, book and regular newsletter – produced with the aim of uniting the strength and knowledge of haematologists in Hong Kong, and of further advancing the clinical management of blood diseases.

Professor Kwong Yok-lam, Chui Fook-chuen Professor in Molecular Medicine and Chair Professor in the Department of Medicine, was the architect of the project, working with the Haematology Team, specialists from the Department. His first aim was simply to provide easily accessible information on the latest advances in the field to doctors working outside of teaching hospitals.

Two years on, the Protocol has been a big success and its reach has gone well beyond Hong Kong. It has become a common reference for blood disease management and acts as a platform for experts around the world to exchange information on the latest developments in the field.

"HKU's Haematology Department is at the forefront of research in Hong Kong and we have many papers published every year," he said. "We put these on our website and in our quarterly newsletter which is sent out to other collaborators around the world – in Europe, North America, Asia and from last year, Africa too – so they are aware of what we are doing here."


> "If experts in other specialities got their act together and shared knowledge online, it has to be beneficial for all."
>
> *Professor Kwong Yok-lam*

## Knowledge for all

The website has also become the go-to place for doctors overseas seeking information on the management of a certain type of lymphoma which derives from natural killer cells and which mainly effects people of Asian and South American origin. "Doctors overseas don't have much experience of it so we receive a lot of enquiries from them seeking guidance on treating this kind of lymphoma," said Professor Kwong. "I'd say we get an enquiry every one or two days."

One use of the website and application that was not foreseen was that patients suffering from blood diseases would also access it, and email questions to the Haematology Team. To make it even more accessible, the process of translating the various elements into both Cantonese and Putonghua is underway and the Chinese language website should be launched later this year.

"We want to make it easier for patients in Hong Kong and Mainland China to read the website. And also for Chinese patients living abroad. There is a lot of interest from expat Chinese, we get many enquiries and we find that when people get ill they often come back to Hong Kong for treatment. I think it's a comfort thing – when we are ill we naturally think of home."

## Audio addition

The Team are also introducing an audio element this year. "Sometimes people want to hear a voice," said Professor Kwong. "Members of my team will create videos, in which they talk about blood cancers and diseases, which will be put up on the website. They will speak in Cantonese and we will provide English and Putonghua subtitles."

In addition, they are adding a 'chatbox' to the website so that people – whether they are doctors or patients – can send in questions and the Team will answer them on line.

The website is constantly updated. Recent updates include information on advances in the first-line treatment of metastatic colorectal cancer, the third most common cancer worldwide and third most common in Hong Kong, contributed to the site by Clinical Assistant Professor Dr Thomas Yau Chung-cheung, the latest drugs for the management of venous thrombo-embalism by Clinical Associate Professor Dr Eric Tse Wai-choi.

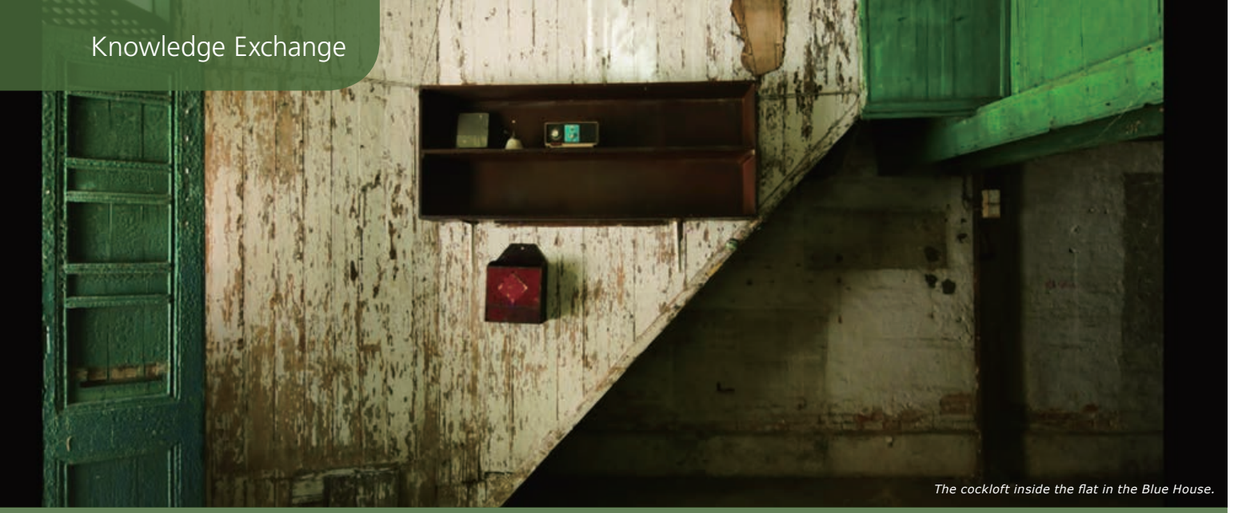
Such has been the success of the Protocol that Professor Kwong urges other disciplines to launch similar tools. "It surprises me that this kind of application and website is not happening all over. Nowadays there is so much research going on and so many breakthroughs being achieved. Even for me, it is difficult finding out what other medical departments within HKU are doing – there's no time! But if experts in other specialities get their act together and share knowledge online, it has to be beneficial for all."

That said, he acknowledges that his own team were sceptical about the idea at first. "Initially they were not very enthusiastic about the project. But as it progressed they have begun to see the benefits and now they are happy to contribute. I hope this enthusiasm will spread to other disciplines and to other teaching hospitals – it seems a good paradigm for other branches of medicine in Hong Kong and around the world too."

For details, please go to *http://www.hpshk.com* ■

*Professor Kwong Yok-lam (third from left), Professor James Chim Chor-sang (second from right), Dr Eric Tse Wai-choi (third from right) and the Haematology Team of the Department of Medicine and Queen Mary Hospital, established the Haematology Protocol.*


*Professor Kwong Yok-lam and the Division of Haematology were awarded the Knowledge Exchange Award 2013 for the 'Multi-media Haematology Protocol: Haematology Protocol Book, iPad/iPhone App, Internet Website'.*



*The cockloft inside the flat in the Blue House.*

# A LESSON IN RESPECTING THE PAST

A student video about life in the historic Blue House highlights frustrating inconsistencies in the Government's heritage policy.

The Blue House in Wan Chai is a striking example of a disappearing era: a tenement building with 13-foot ceilings that echoes a period when everyone mucked in together, like the 1973 film *House of 72 Tenants*. The building's special status is recognised by its Grade 1 Historic Building designation and by the fact that for the first time, the Government has allowed occupants to remain in a building targeted for heritage preservation.

But, as a group of HKU students has shown, this noble goal is being undermined by the Government's own bureaucracy.

The students were involved in a Knowledge Exchange project to create a video of the life and culture of the Blue House – one of a number of Blue House projects initiated by HKU and spearheaded by Dr Mirana Szeto of the Department of Comparative Literature.

After much discussion about the ordinariness of life in the building and how to present it, the students decided to focus on the 'cockloft', an internal wooden balcony added in many of the building's rooms in the 1950s and 1960s to create additional space after Hong Kong experienced a huge swell in its population. Cocklofts were used as bedrooms and main living spaces for families, and later as storage space, office space or spare room.

But now, as the students found, the cocklofts must be removed because the Government says they were not part of the original building plans. Their video has thus become another way of 'preserving' this vernacular architecture and the life attached to it, and most importantly, to keep the issues behind its disappearance alive.

Serene Chan, who was team leader during her final year at HKU (she graduated with a BA in 2013), said they struggled at first to understand why they should preserve "that piece of wood".

"It made me think about what preservation means. It's not about preserving the material of the cockloft, it is about presenting the residents' way of using the space according to their own wishes."

For Timothy Kau, who is doing a Masters in Urban Planning, it made him look beyond the professional aim of preserving diversity in the built environment. "Another key word is social network. I learned that the everyday life and interactions are very important. This has added another meaning of heritage preservation to my education."

The students' output includes a 40-minute video, photos, drawings and a physical model of the Blue House. The video was screened last year and will feature in the Hong Kong House of Stories, an initiative at the Blue House under Dr Szeto's group that will open to the public in 2016. ■

*A model of a flat with a cockloft.*

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The ***Bulletin*** magazine reports on activities, events and research initiated by members of the University. It aims to keep the local and international communities informed of new breakthroughs and achievements in all of our faculties and disciplines.

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