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THE FINAL JOURNEY

Death and Bereavement in Hong Kong



**Botanical
Breakthrough**
New plant
species in
Hong Kong



**Adventure in
the Amazon**
Knowledge
exchange
initiative in
Ecuador





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News in Brief

In Memoriam

Remembering Dr Rayson Huang, the 10th Vice-Chancellor



Dr Rayson Huang, 1920-2015.

The University's 10th Vice-Chancellor Dr Rayson Huang passed away in the United Kingdom peacefully on April 8 at the age of 94. The Funeral Service for Dr Huang was held at Lodge Hill Crematorium on April 24 in the United Kingdom, while a memorial gathering was held on May 6 at the Rayson Huang Theatre at the University for members in the HKU family.

The memorial gathering, which brought together over 300 colleagues, alumni and friends who came to commemorate Dr Huang, commenced with a silent tribute, followed by an address by President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson, who was on a business trip, in the form of a video message and an eulogy by Emeritus Professor Rosie Young.



A memorial gathering with a string quartet performance was held at the Rayson Huang Theatre on May 6. One of the five violins donated by Dr Rayson Huang to the University when he retired was also displayed.

Having met Dr Huang in person in Birmingham in early 2014 before he assumed office, Professor Mathieson said: "Dr Rayson Huang made great contributions to Hong Kong, in academic, social and political arenas alike. He will be greatly missed by the University and many members of the public, and we send our deepest condolences to his family."

Tributes were also delivered by many HKU members, including Pro-Chancellor Dr the Honourable Sir David Li, Pro-Chancellor from 1994 to 2001 Dr the Honourable Sir Yang Ti-liang, HKU's 11th Vice-Chancellor Professor Wang Gungwu and the 14th Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui.

A video of the work and life of Dr Rayson Huang was shown, and HKU's Union Philharmonic Orchestra performed a string quartet arrangement of the Cantonese pop song *When in Life's Journey Tears are Shed*. Professor Christopher Huang, one of the sons of Dr Rayson Huang, delivered a note of thanks on behalf of the family.

As a distinguished chemist who was conferred the degree of Doctor of Science *honoris causa*



Professor Christopher Huang, one of the sons of Dr Rayson Huang, delivered a note of thanks on behalf of the family.

from HKU in 1968, Dr Rayson Huang was the University's first Chinese Vice-Chancellor, the first alumnus to hold the position and also one of the longest serving. Under his leadership from 1972 to 1986, the University experienced an unprecedented period of growth by doubling the size of student body from 4,000 to 8,000, increasing the number of Faculties from five to nine, expanding the size of the campus while unifying it, and initiating a culture of institutional advancement that continues to flourish today. In recognition of his contributions to the University, a bronze statue of Dr Huang commissioned by Dr the Honourable Sir David Li was crafted and installed in the foyer of Rayson Huang Theatre in 2005.

Dr Huang also served the Hong Kong community as a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong (1977-1983) and the Basic Law Drafting Committee for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. He actively contributed to the development of the higher education sector in the Mainland, particularly in the establishment of Shantou University. ■



Dr Rayson Huang (fifth from left) with the then senior management team members and guests at the unveiling ceremony of his bronze sculpture in September, 2005.



As a keen violinist himself, Dr Huang (left) performed two Cantonese pop songs on solo violin after the unveiling ceremony of his sculpture in 2005.

HKU Outstanding Academics Win Worldwide Accolades



Professor Frederick Leung is the first ever Changjiang Scholar named in the field of Mathematics Education.



Professor Zhou Zheng has been appointed a Changjiang Scholar 2013–2014.



Professor Zhao Guochun (centre) and Professor Sun Min (right) receiving the second-class State Natural Science Awards 2014.

Six remarkable HKU scholars have recently been awarded with prestigious honours for their achievements in their own disciplines.

Professor Frederick Leung from the Faculty of Education and Professor Zhou Zheng from the School of Business have been appointed Changjiang Scholars 2013–2014 by the Ministry of Education in Mainland China. Changjiang Scholars are in the top tier of China's 'High-level Creative Talents Plan' which aims to recruit talented academics, establishing masters in their respective academic disciplines in order to promote development of those disciplines to the highest international level. Professor Leung is also the first ever Changjiang Scholar named in the field of Mathematics Education.

Professor Zhao Guochun and his team with members including Professor Sun Min, both from the Department of Earth Sciences, were presented with the second-class State Natural Science Awards 2014 for his research on 'Paleoproterozoic amalgamation of the North China Craton and the assembly of the Columbia supercontinent' which has led to significant

scientific achievements highlighted by more than 200 scientific papers. The State Natural Science Award is China's most prestigious award in natural science and Professor Zhao's team was among two Hong Kong teams who have won the Award this year.

In recognition of his outstanding scholarship in the field of international affairs, Professor Xu Guoqi from the Department of History was awarded the prestigious Shigemitsu Fellowship by the Japan Society of Boston. The Fellowship was recently established by the Global Culture Center of the Japan Society of Boston for encouraging new research and scholarship in the field of international affairs. Being one of the world's most eminent scholars in the fields of modern Chinese and international history, Professor Xu is currently working on a trilogy of shared history. For his latest publication, please refer to the 'Books' column on p48–49.

Professor Angela Leung, Joseph Needham – Philip Mao Professor in Chinese History, Science and Civilization, from the School of Humanities received the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques from the French

Ministry of National Education (Higher Education and Research) for her academic achievements and contributions to French culture. An official bestowal ceremony, chaired by the French Consul General in Hong Kong, Mr Arnaud Barthélémy, took place at the Residence of the French Consulate in Hong Kong on April 1.

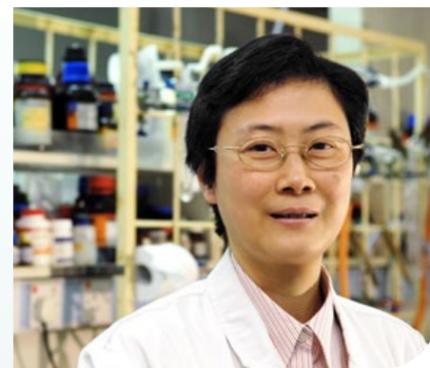
Professor Vivian Yam, Philip Wong Wilson Wong Professor in Chemistry and Energy, from the Department of Chemistry, has been presented with the Ludwig Mond Award 2015 from the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) in the United Kingdom. Professor Yam was awarded for her work on the innovative design of new strategies utilising non-covalent metal-metal interactions as spectroscopic reporters for host-guest interactions and microenvironment changes, and for chemosensing and biological assays and she will be invited to give lectures at universities in the United Kingdom. It is the second time Professor Yam has been honoured by the RSC – she was awarded the Centenary Lectureship and Medal (now renamed as the RSC Centenary Prize) by the RSC in 2005–2006. ■



Professor Xu Guoqi is one of the first recipients of the Shigemitsu Fellowship.



Professor Angela Leung (left) receiving the Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Palmes académiques from Mr Arnaud Barthélémy, French Consul General in Hong Kong.



After being recognised by the Royal Society of Chemistry a decade ago, Professor Vivian Yam has now been honoured with the Ludwig Mond Award 2015.

Six Prominent HKU Academics Honoured with Croucher Awards

The Croucher Foundation honoured ten academics from four universities with Croucher Innovation Awards, Croucher Senior Research Fellowships and Croucher Senior Medical Research Fellowships to recognise their exceptional scientific research achievements. A presentation ceremony officiated by the Honourable Mr John Tsang Chun-wah, Financial Secretary of the HKSAR Government, was held on April 14 in which all guests observed a moment of silence in memory of Dr Rayson Huang, former HKU Vice-Chancellor and founding member and life Trustee of the Croucher Foundation, who passed away on April 8.

Of the ten awardees who were honoured for their accomplishments, six were scholars from HKU. Dr Stephanie Ma Kwai-yee from the Department of Anatomy and Dr Zhang Shizhong from the Department of Physics received Croucher Innovation Awards. Dr Benjamin John Cowling from the School of Public Health and Professor Zhou Zhongjun



From left: Dr Zhang Shizhong, Professor Zhou Zhongjun, Dr Stephanie Ma Kwai-yee, Dr Benjamin John Cowling, Professor Patrick Woo Chiu-yat and Professor Khoo Ui-soon.

from the Department of Biochemistry were awarded Croucher Senior Research Fellowships, and Professor Khoo Ui-soon from the Department of Pathology and Professor Patrick Woo Chiu-yat from the Department of Microbiology were presented with Croucher Senior Medical Research Fellowships.

The Croucher Innovation Awards were established in 2012 for supporting promising

scholars working in the natural sciences, technology and medicine to further pursue their own professional inclinations, to advance their expertise and to contribute to the development of education and research in Hong Kong. Introduced in 1997, the Croucher Senior Research Fellowships are awarded to local academics who have excelled in scientific research work as judged by leading international scientists. ■

HKU Celebrates Excellence in Teaching, Research and Knowledge Exchange

The University held its annual Award Presentation Ceremony for Excellence in Teaching, Research and Knowledge Exchange in Loke Yew Hall on March 30 to honour the outstanding achievements of close to 100 academics.

The Ceremony, attended by over 400 guests, was presided over by President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson and Dr the Honourable Sir David Li Kwok-po was the Guest of Honour.

In his opening speech, Professor Mathieson said: "The award scheme was set up and expanded precisely to give due recognition to the many otherwise unsung heroes that help HKU thrive and flourish. So, to all the awardees, thank you for your invaluable contributions to HKU. You are the ones who have brought the University to the next level of excellence."



At the Ceremony, the teaching philosophies and research achievements of individual awardees were presented in the form of tailor-made videos. The awards presented included, *inter alia*, the Outstanding Teaching Award, Outstanding Researcher Award, Outstanding Young Researcher Award, Outstanding Research Student Supervisor

Award, Faculty Teaching Awards, Research Output Prize and Knowledge Exchange Award.

For the list of awardees and more about the Award Presentation Ceremony, please go to <http://www.hku.hk/award> ■

United Nations Campaign HeForShe at HKU Calling for Men to Advocate Gender Equality on Campus

HKU has become the first university in the world to launch on campus the HeForShe initiative, a United Nations (UN) campaign calling for greater gender equality. To mark this significant milestone, a launch event presided by Head of HeForShe Ms Elizabeth Nyamayaro and HKU President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson was held in Loke Yew Hall on April 10.

In attendance were guests including Hong Kong Equal Opportunities Commission Chairman Dr York Chow, University Grants Committee Secretary-General Dr Richard Armour and about 300 university members who support the initiative.

With a goal of spreading awareness of the responsibility that men and boys have in eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, HeForShe is meant to get men actively involved in advocating gender equality.



The 300 guests forming the HeForShe logo at the launch event in Loke Yew Hall.



Delightedly accepting the invitation to be a member of 10x10x10, an impact group created by UN Women comprising 10 Heads of State, 10 CEOs of global corporations and 10 University Presidents, Professor Peter Mathieson not only pledged his commitment

to improving gender equality, but also called on all the men in the HKU community to join the rally and make a real difference.

For more about HeForShe initiative, please go to www.heforshe.org ■

“The Next Station Is HKU!”

Mass Transit Railway’s West Island Line Arrives at the University



The platform of the HKU Mass Transit Railway station.



The corridor directed to the lift lobby to the Main Campus displaying over a hundred years of HKU history in photos.

With the completion of the three-kilometre extension to Western District of the Island Line of the Mass Transit Railway after almost six years of construction, the HKU station was officially opened on December 28, 2014.

Located 70 metres below ground, the HKU station is currently MTR’s deepest

and biggest underground station in the network.

There are six exits in the HKU station of which three are directly linked to the HKU campus – two to the Main Campus and one to the Centennial Campus. A highlight of the station is the nearly-100-metre corridor that presents a century of HKU through rare historical photos.

The other two new stations, namely Kennedy Town station and Sai Ying Pun station, began service in December, 2014 and March, 2015 respectively, marking the commencement of full service on the Island Line. ■

THE FINAL JOURNEY

The ageing of Hong Kong’s population means more of us are facing death, or the death of our loved ones, than ever before. HKU scholars have been looking at some of the key issues for a peaceful end, including where we die, what happens to our remains, bereavement and spiritual well-being.



PRELUDE TO DYING

There are many, often poetic ways to describe death – shuffling off the mortal coil, venturing to the Yellow Springs, giving up the ghost, joining the invisible choir, to name a few. But a reluctance to talk more forthrightly about this inevitable journey, particularly in Chinese society, means people may die in a manner out of tune with their wishes. HKU scholars are trying to break down the barriers to reaching a peaceful end.

What is a good death? Minimal pain and suffering in the company of loved ones, to be sure, but maybe there is something more: a sense of control over how we spend our final days.

In a city where more than 90 per cent of people pass away in hospital, such an ending can be difficult to achieve. The system is such that those with terminal illnesses in particular

can find themselves in an acute hospital ward subject to extraordinary measures to keep them alive, rather than a calmer palliative environment or even at home.

Researchers at HKU have been studying the problem from the perspective of everyone involved – patients, families, nursing homes and medical staff – to help people express their wishes, reconcile the profound

emotions around caring for those who are dying, and understand that this, too, is a part of life.

“Dying is living and living is dying. We are on the road to death the minute we are born,” the Dean of Medicine, Professor Gabriel Leung, said. “The last days of a patient’s life are often like a musical cadenza. They’re the most brilliant part of their whole person



“If you ask people where they want to die, of course they say at home... [But] who is going to take care of them?”

Professor Cecilia Chan

journey – or they can be. Our job is to make sure that they are so, rather than a terminal decline and wait for the inevitable.”

Dissonance in end-of-life care

Achieving a brilliant end is a challenge in modern-day Hong Kong. The breakdown of the extended family and long workdays for the healthy mean that patients with chronic or terminal illnesses, such as dementia or cancer, need outside assistance.

“If you ask people where they want to die, of course they say at home,” said Professor Cecilia Chan, Si Yuan Professor in Health and Social Work, Head of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, who has been studying end-of-life care and death in Hong Kong for two decades. “But when you have someone who has high dependency or terminal illness, who is going to take care of them? We are very lucky to have domestic helpers here, but fewer and fewer of them are willing to work with the elderly.”

Seven per cent of Hong Kong’s elderly live in nursing homes, one of the highest proportions in the world. Most of the staff are not trained properly in caring for terminally-ill patients and for even the most minor ailments, they want hospitals to handle it.

“If a terminally-ill resident has a fever, the first thing the nursing home will do is ship them off to hospital. This creates a lot of trauma and physical and psychological pain for the resident because they have to leave an environment they are familiar with for the cold and unfamiliar hospital environment,” said Dr Andy Ho, Honorary Lecturer of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration and Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre on Behavioural Health and Sau Po Centre on Ageing.

Dr Ho has conducted two pilot projects on end-of-life care involving clusters of nursing homes and their nearby hospitals. Nursing home staff received basic training on treating symptoms such as fever. If the patient did not improve and needed further care, they were

sent to the hospital under an expedited pathway that bypassed the usual registration procedures and the acute ward to admit them directly to the palliative care unit.

Advance care planning was also arranged, so patients could let the nursing home and hospital know about their wishes and concerns in advance. This not only honoured the patient’s final wishes – something Dr Ho verified in interviews with the families of patients and staff in the nursing homes and hospitals – it also saved on hospital resources.

“Without an advance care directive in place, patients with terminal illness can end up in emergency wards where the medical staff will do whatever treatment they can to save lives,” Dr Ho said. These treatments can be invasive, unwanted – and expensive, something that has to be an important consideration given the ageing population and rising costs of healthcare.

Harmonising with patients’ wishes

Advance care planning allows individuals to indicate treatments they would and would not want in the event of loss of capacity, such as irreversible coma. In Hong Kong, the Law Reform Commission has produced a non-statutory form that patients may complete, but as yet a system to coordinate and communicate patients’ wishes among nursing homes, emergency services and hospitals has not been developed (Dr Ho’s projects were one-offs).

Marie Kobler, Research Officer in the Centre for Medical Ethics and Law, arrived at HKU two years ago from the United States where she worked as a healthcare attorney.

“For seriously-ill patients, the United States is moving towards an addition to advance directives called ‘POLST’, which are actual physician orders for life-sustaining treatment. While not for everyone, patients nearing the end of life can request specific orders – such as comfort care only or no artificial nutrition by tube – and these are kept on record to avoid any possibility of mistakes,” she said.

“There has been a lot of discussion in Hong Kong about whether people are ready to embrace the process of advance care planning, whether they are comfortable talking about death. Certainly a number of studies say



Dr Ho (right) holds life-and-death education workshops for medical staff in hospitals.



Dr Ho’s team carries out a great variety of community life-and-death education programmes, including the palliative care programme in Noah Art.



“ Advance care planning in the West is very individualistic... But in the Chinese and Asian context, we cannot just focus specifically on the patients because no big decisions are made by the individual alone. It is always a family decision. ”

Dr Andy Ho

Chinese people are perfectly willing to talk about death and want to plan for it.”

However, it is not a simple case of copying the experience of the West, said Dr Ho, who has been studying advance care planning.

“Advance care planning in the West is very individualistic – you talk with the patient about what they want and follow their wishes. But in the Chinese and Asian context, we cannot just focus specifically on the patients because no big decisions are made by the individual alone. It is always a family decision. In order for advance care planning to work, the care team has to work with the entire family to come up with a consensus about what the family wants and what the patient wants, and help them negotiate a decision that every party is satisfied with.”

Off-key findings

There is also a caveat about advance care planning: it may not always achieve the desired outcome for patients. Dr Ho has also been studying data on health and retirement collected from 3,700 subjects in the United States over the past 10 years, including psychosocial well-being in the final days of life. “Surprisingly and disconcertingly” people suffering from lung and heart disease, stroke or memory problems who had advance directives experienced greater depression, pain and social agitation than those who did not have directives, he said.

“There are two possible explanations for this. People with advance directives are more educated and probably know specifically what they want, so perhaps their demands and expectations of care are higher.

“The second possibility, more importantly, is that people who execute advance directives may be much more focussed on getting the

documents signed than treating this as part of a process. They want people to sign off their lives and once they sign the document, that’s the end of it.

“Advance directives should be the beginning of an important dialogue to help the physician and his interdisciplinary care team understand what the patient wants. The final goal should not be signing the document, but providing continuous dialogue and support, and re-visiting these goals to see if they have been taken care of.”

That requires a shift not only in how the dying are cared for, but how their caregivers are prepared.

Attuned to the dying

The professionals who care for the dying can experience death anxiety, negative attitudes to death and emotional burnout. “A lot of people working in end-of-life and palliative care may have the clinical skills to treat dying patients, but emotionally and psychologically, they are not prepared to provide support in relieving their existential suffering,” Dr Ho said.

He has developed art therapy and mindfulness programmes to help frontline social workers, nurses and doctors in Hong Kong and Singapore express their feelings about death and cope with the pressures.

HKU’s Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine has also made reflections on death, dying and bereavement part of its new Medical Humanities curriculum, which was launched in 2012. Recognising that this can be an uncomfortable and emotional topic for young doctors-in-training, many of them still teenagers, the curriculum eases them in with reflections on death in art, film and literature, an introduction to cross-cultural customs and rituals, a visit to the mortuary and, in their

fourth year, an opportunity to shadow a health-care professional and observe discussions relating to end-of-life care.

Professor Leung explained their humbling goals: “It is only through living with those experiences and really having the opportunity and privilege of sharing the last days of a patient’s journey, that can one even begin to appreciate how inadequate we are as healthcare providers. All we can possibly hope to do as teachers is to inculcate in students that sense of awakening, that they need to learn more, think more and always be sensitive to these emotions if they wish to become better practitioners.”

The secret is to hold on to the objective, professional values of their medical training, but with heart. “Above all, it’s about helping people to live better even as they die. It’s easier than it sounds. It requires doctors to be human,” he said.

Such awareness, among doctors as well as other caregivers, could inspire improvements in how Hong Kong cares for the dying. “There is no government-led initiative on end-of-life care in Hong Kong, so it is all down to the leaders of hospitals and nursing homes,” Dr Ho said. “They will eventually face the end of life, too. When they do, what service do they want to see? Having passion and compassion can help to drive and accelerate the process to change.” ■



The mindfulness workshop is part of the Medical Humanities curriculum for doctors-in-training.



The International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society (ICGB), the renowned tri-annual international event that was held in Asia for the first time, brought together over 1,000 local and overseas scholars.



Conference participants from around the world joined the Death Café sharing.

Death dialogues in the community

Scholars in HKU’s Faculty of Social Sciences have initiated several community programmes over the past decade to reduce the stigma attached to death.

From 2006 to 2010, the Centre on Behavioural Health (CBH) coordinated Project ENABLE (Empowerment Network for Adjustment to Bereavement and Loss in End-of-life), which received HK\$20 million in funding from the Hong Kong Jockey Club to raise awareness and conduct training and research to improve attitudes towards death, dying and bereavement.

In 2011 the Centre developed the Hospice Home website (www.hospicehome.hk) with

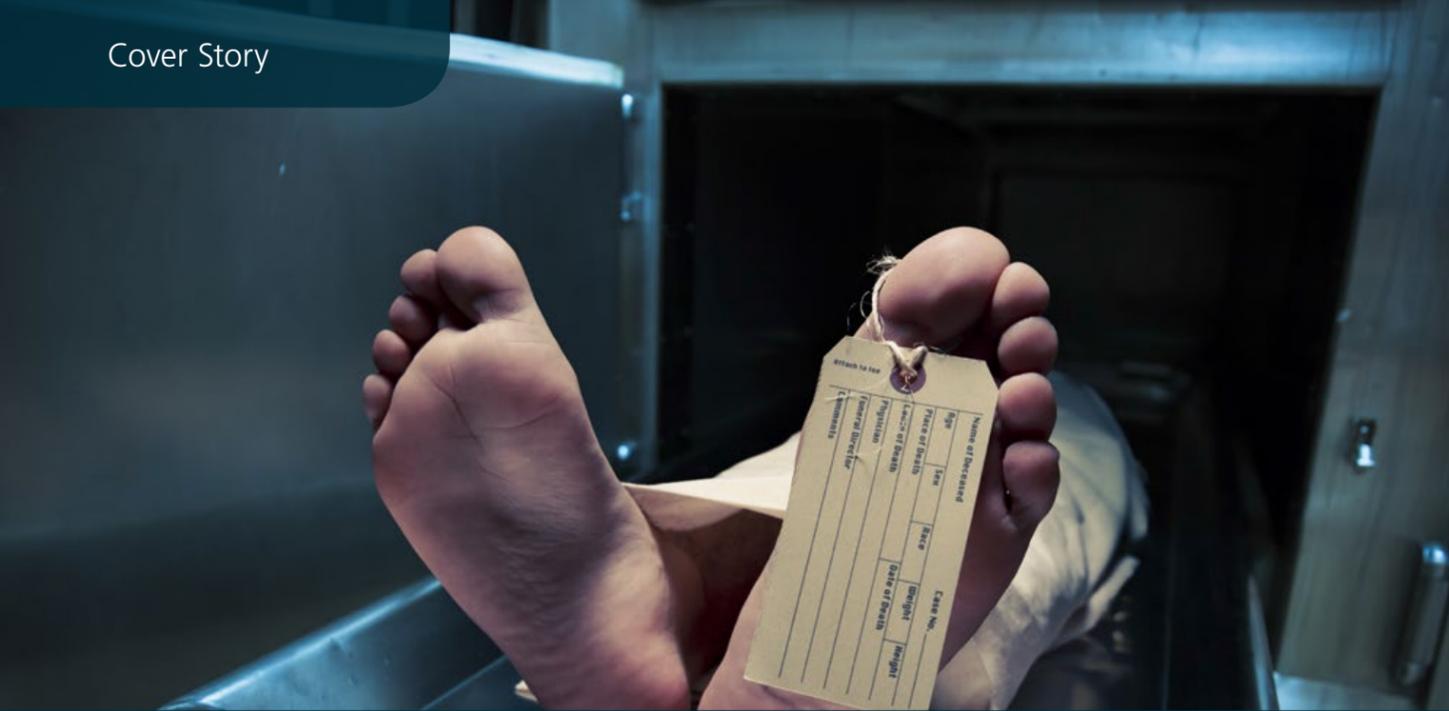
the Li Ka Shing Foundation and the Hospital Authority. It provides information on caring for the terminally-ill and honouring their memory, for patients, their families, medical staff and volunteers.

Last year the Faculty organised the 10th International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society, which was attended by about 1,000 people from around the world. Public education events were also organised, such as a ‘Death Café’ to talk about death.

The Faculty also provides death education training for service professionals and periodically conducts public surveys on death

attitudes, which have generally become more positive over the past few years, although a significant minority still think recently-bereaved families should stay to themselves because of the ‘bad luck’ attached to them.

Professor Cecilia Chan, who founded the CBH, was a central organiser in all of these events and believes their work is far from done. “We must do much more to encourage community acceptance of death. We want there to be fewer regrets for family members and less unfinished business for people who pass away,” she said.



THE POST-MORTEM DILEMMA

To autopsy or not to autopsy? Families increasingly argue against them, but there are good reasons why we need to stem the decline in autopsies, argues pathologist Dr Philip Beh.

When celebrity singer Leslie Cheung jumped off the balcony of the Mandarin Hotel in 2003, Hong Kong went into shock. The media was saturated with stories about the suicide of the beloved entertainer. But after the headlines dwindled, the impact of his death was felt by an unlikely group: pathologists.

Cheung's family had successfully argued for an autopsy waiver and news reports of this emboldened others to do the same. The coroner of the time was sympathetic and allowed many of the applications.

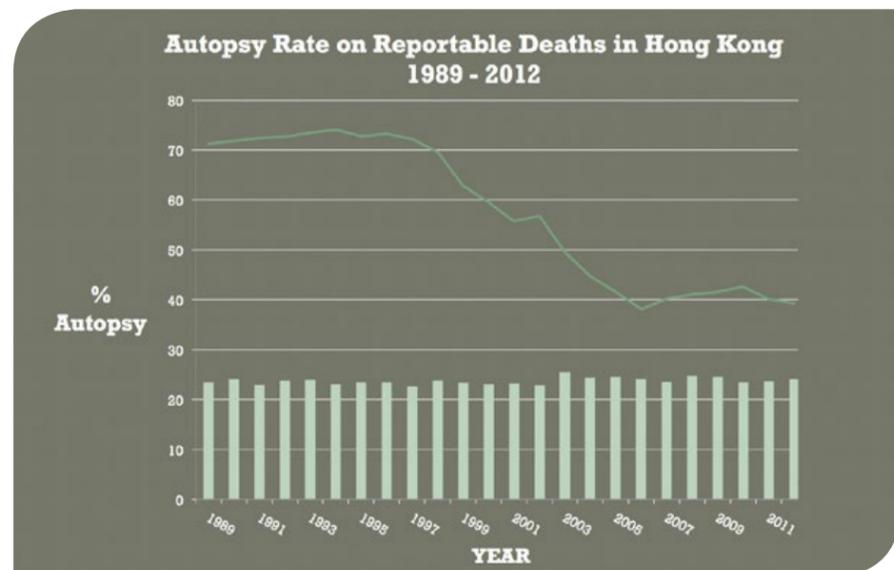
To Dr Philip Beh of the Department of Pathology, this was an outrage. Autopsies are meant to be conducted for 20 reportable incidents, such as murder, suicide and when the cause of death is unknown. Although today's coroner is less likely to grant waivers, the portion of reportable deaths autopsied has still dropped from 70 per cent two decades ago to less than 40 per cent today.

"Families have become much more vocal in challenging the system. In almost 90 per cent

of the cases I see now, they ask the coroner to consider waiving the autopsy requirement.

"But there are times when we really don't know what happened. Other than finding out why someone died, could this death have been

preventable? Are there unusual deaths we should be aware of? Here is one scenario. In the earliest days of SARS, when we were hearing news from Guangzhou, a question was raised in the Legislative Council asking what the incidence of 'atypical pneumonia'



The line graph shows the declining rate of autopsy whereas the bars show the stable percentage of all deaths reported to the coroner.



“ There are times when we really don't know what happened. Other than finding out why someone died, could this death have been preventable? Are there unusual deaths we should be aware of? ”

Dr Philip Beh

was in Hong Kong. We had no answers because it wasn't being captured.”

'So-called tradition'

Dr Beh has reviewed applications for autopsy waivers over seven years at Queen Mary Hospital and found the reasons were often based on emotion, not fact.

“Most people mentioned so-called tradition. But they are never clear what they mean by that. In general, people don't like autopsies – this is not unique to the Chinese, the Jewish and Muslim religions don't like them also.”

Families also cited the old age of the patient, particularly for those who died outside of

hospitals such as in nursing homes where there are no doctors on duty to sign death certificates.

“Families will say, what are you doing, they had health problems, they were bed-ridden, in a sense their death is a blessing and now you are creating all these troubles for me. But one of these cases could be a homicide because someone got fed up looking after that person,” he said. “It's always a dilemma for us how far to push.”

Dr Beh tries to explain to families that it is in their interest to determine the cause of death. If it was an accident, there could be insurance benefits. If they were unhappy with the medical or nursing home care, an autopsy

could answer questions. “Surely they want the death to be meaningful, so if anything can be learned, we know about it rather than leaving it dangling in the air.”

He and his team have also been trying to keep bodies intact by using endoscopes to determine the cause of death where possible. Computerised tomography (CT) scans are used in some countries, though not yet in Hong Kong.

In the meantime, Dr Beh has been conducting public talks to help people see that even in the finality of death, choices can be made and others can benefit from them. ■

Paying respect to the 'great body teacher'

Bodies are important to the learning of future doctors, but until recently they were in short supply in Hong Kong's medical schools.

Only a few years ago, anatomy students of the Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine had fewer than five bodies per year to work on. Now they are meeting their target of 20, thanks to the efforts of Dr Chan Lap-ki, the Assistant Dean of Pedagogy, who has been promoting body donation. His goal is to serve the needs of his students and, by extension, the general population.

“There is a very big difference between models and software that are designed for anatomy classes, and the actual body. Those tools idealise the human body and its structures, but in the actual body, things are not so well-defined. And everything is red, there are only slight differences in colour. This is something students need to learn,” he said.



Medical students observing a moment of silence in the respect ceremony.

Students are also expected to honour what is known in Chinese as the 'great body teacher'. A respect service is held in the anatomy dissection class each year, and students must write a reflective essay on their feelings at seeing a dead body for the first time. “Many of them say it makes them realise how serious their chosen study is,” Dr Chan said.

The show of respect extends beyond the classroom. A memorial wall has been set up at Junk Bay Chinese Permanent Cemetery where families can scatter the ashes after the great body teachers have done their educational duty.



GOOD GRIEF

Dr Amy Chow of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration has been investigating how to help people navigate the tides of grief.

The nuclear families, longer life spans and breakdown of community that characterise modern living are also changing the character of modern life after death.

More and more people are alone in bereavement, unable to talk to friends because of the taboo against discussing death in Chinese society, or because their friends try to minimise their grief by encouraging them to move on or even to see death as a joyous journey to heaven.

All of that is cold comfort to the recently bereaved and deeply concerning to Dr Amy Chow in Social Work, whose focus of research is grief.

“We’re worried because family sizes are getting smaller and a lot of couples are not having children, which means their spouse becomes their only confidante. When they die, they feel like their family is totally disintegrating,” she said. “We need some formal systems in the community to support them.”

Dr Chow has been studying and developing interventions for various groups, most recently

widows, the intellectually disabled, suicides and even pet owners, to improve understanding and help them through this difficult process.

A safe haven

Her intervention with elderly widows encouraged them to ‘oscillate’ between contemplating their loss and attending to daily living and new relationships. This was found to

reduce their physical symptoms, depression and anxiety compared with a group that underwent a more traditional intervention focussed on the sense of loss.

“A lot of older adults we’ve worked with find our groups a safe haven to share their feelings. They said in a follow-up interview that they never had the chance to talk about their grief in such an open way because no one wanted to listen or could understand,” she said.



Dr Chow organises workshops for bereaved persons to lessen their grief.



“Family sizes are getting smaller and a lot of couples are not having children, which means their spouse becomes their only confidante. When they die, they feel like their family is totally disintegrating.”

Dr Amy Chow

A similar sense of isolation could be drawn for grieving pet owners. Dr Chow surveyed more than 500 of them and found they missed their lost pet as much as older adults who lost their partners to cancer. She saw this as another example of modern realities.

“Some couples choose not to have children but have a pet instead, and they treat the pet as a family member. When the pet dies, they also suffer grief and bereavement, which is usually overlooked by others. It can be as great a blow as someone who loses a human loved one,” she said.

Another group often neglected in grief is the intellectually disabled. Death matters have become much more complicated for this group because they are living longer – it used to be their parents could expect to outlive them.

“With medical advances, this special group now lives longer than their parents, who are becoming nervous about who will take care of their kids, or if they die whether their children will understand what is going on.”

Moving forward

Dr Chow has collaborated with a rehabilitation service for the intellectually disabled to ascertain how much they understand, and develop a manual, training video and workshops for working with this group on death issues. Interestingly, about one-third of the subjects she worked with understood basic notions of death.

“We’re not focussing on the meaning of death. I want them to know life has a limit. From that we discuss what is the purpose of life and what are the things you want to do when both you and your parents are still around.”

“I have been surprised that even though they have limited ability, some of them were able to articulate that they want to learn how to take good care of themselves so their parents don’t have to worry about what will happen when they die.”

A final focus for Dr Chow has not so obviously changed with modern living but is nonetheless

very painful: bereavement after suicide. She has developed an intervention model to help families support each other through the trauma and feelings of guilt.

“Family members may blame themselves and don’t want to talk about what has happened. But in reality they need support and intervention. Research shows people bereaved by suicide have a higher chance of suicide compared to other bereaved persons,” she said. The key is to get them to communicate and appreciate what they have as they move on.

This idea resonates in an activity Dr Chow organised with elderly widows, to release fish and shrimp into the sea.

“Some of the fish stayed near the shore and did not swim away,” she said. “The bereaved participants told them, ‘you have to go, you have to move on.’” Almost as if they were talking to themselves. ■



To pet owners, the passing away of a pet can be as traumatic as losing their human loved ones.



Dr Chow takes elderly widows to release fish and shrimp into the sea for helping them to move on.



A MEANINGFUL END

Spirituality is an important part of successful ageing, but it has a different meaning for Chinese elderly compared with their Western counterparts.

The staff at a Tung Wah Group of Hospitals' nursing home thought they were doing everything right for their residents when they launched a programme to enhance physical, psychosocial and spiritual care. But while they achieved good results on the first two goals, the spirituality measures did not improve. Seeking an answer, they turned to Dr Vivian Lou for help.

Dr Lou, of the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, studies culture-specific issues in care-giving, particularly psychological well-being. She saw the possibility here of a mismatch between the programme used by the nursing home, which was modelled on Western concepts of a higher being and afterlife, and the Chinese population that it served.

"In Chinese society, if you ask people if they have a religion, they will say they worship ancestors and do some rituals during holidays or festivals, but they don't have very strong views on life after life," she said. She therefore

started to explore how Chinese perceived spirituality.

Focus group discussions with elderly participants were organised and analysed for their content and language. Distinct views emerged. "Older Chinese care less where they will go after they die or whether they will transform into another form of life. Rather, it is

the harmony of their relationships that contributes to their concept of what we call transcendence.

"As you age, it is not the physical or material world that counts but transcendence. If you don't have this, you will very be fearful of death and dying, and pain and loss of strength," she said.



It is common for Chinese to worship ancestors but they don't have strong views on life after life.



“ In Chinese society, if you ask people if they have a religion, they will say they worship ancestors and do some rituals during holidays or festivals, but they don't have very strong views on life after life. ”

Dr Vivian Lou

Life energy from relationships

Dr Lou formulated a model of Chinese spirituality that was tested in a survey of more than 800 adults in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and in interventions with Hong Kong elderly.

The latter involved protocols organised around concepts of the interdependent self and social orientation: opening up the mind, spiritual breath, self-reintegration, family support, friendship, forgiveness, and harmonious relationship with the environment. The interventions were administered to experimental and control groups, and resulted in the former reporting greater spiritual well-being, reduced anger, more hopeful feelings about the future, and an improved evaluation of meaning in life.

"Sometimes older people feel stuck. They may think, only my son can give me life energy, not

anyone else. But they can also get energy from self-love and care, family, friends, other people around them and the environment – from these five types of relationships. We want them to expand their recognition and achievement of meaning in life," she said.

Dr Lou has developed a self-help book based on the intervention and is now assessing a group using the book. She also plans to develop an application. ■



Professional intervention manual and self-help spirit booklets developed by Dr Vivian Lou based on spiritual process model for Chinese older adults.

Death in Chinese philosophy

The two famous philosophical schools of ancient China hold contrasting views on death and bereavement, one rooted in practical rituals, the other in a more elusive identification with natural processes.

Dr Chris Fraser of the Department of Philosophy has pondered concepts of death in both Confucianism and Daoism.

Confucianism, represented by Xunzi, has an elaborate system of rituals to remove the fear of death and ground it in human activity.

"For Confucians, order is achieved through the cultural system of ritual propriety, which allows them to maintain an unbroken continuity in life. They don't

worship divinities or have conceptions of the afterlife, except perhaps Chinese folk conceptions. Even then, many Confucians do not believe in ghosts and spirits so they are not religious in that sense," he said.

Confucians recognise the prominence of nature but argue it does not provide values or instructions on how to live, hence the need for ceremony and rituals, including those pertaining to death.

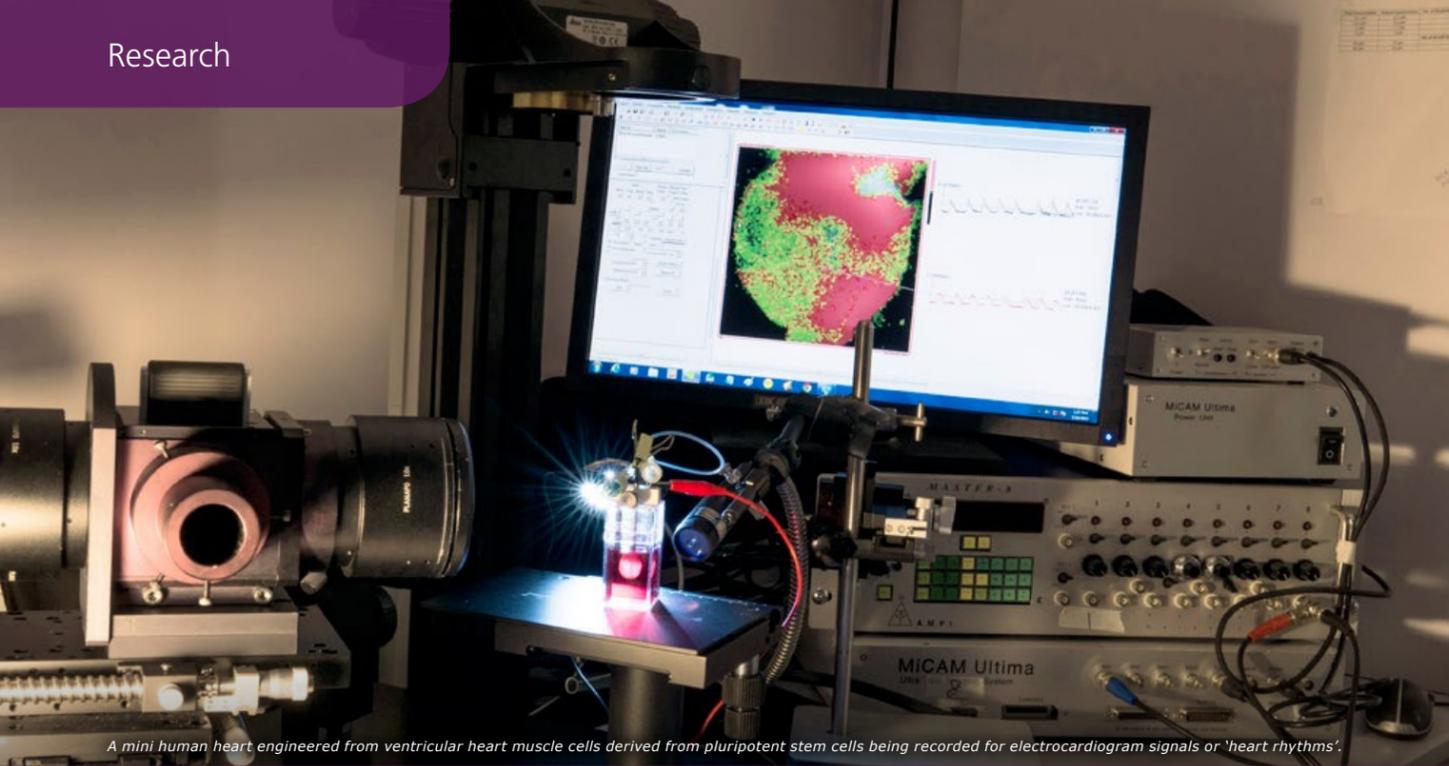
Daoists, on the other hand, as represented by Zhuangzi, preach an acceptance of death as part of the flow of nature. Most strikingly, they see death as a good thing.

"There's a wonderful line in Zhuangzi," said Dr Fraser, "that 'what makes my life good is the very thing that makes my death good'. I think they will say all these good things in life

issue from a relation with the grand flow of things, which is one way they think of Dao, or the Way. Fundamentally, the value in life comes out of my relation to that, so why not identify with it? If you do, then death is just another part of the flow."

The concept was exemplified when Zhuangzi was discovered singing a happy song after his wife's death. "He said that if he howled after her because he lost her, it would show utter incompetence with respect to the inevitable aspects of life. So he stopped mourning.

"We all agree that after grieving, you get to a point where you're not emotionally upset any more, yet you continue to acknowledge this wonderful relationship you had with the lost person. The Zhuangzi writers seemed to think you could jump straight to that phase," said Dr Fraser.



A mini human heart engineered from ventricular heart muscle cells derived from pluripotent stem cells being recorded for electrocardiogram signals or 'heart rhythms'.

THE MINI-HEART REVOLUTION

HKU researchers have developed the world's first human mini-heart, which is radically changing drug discovery and opening up the promise of growing a full-sized, transplantable heart in the laboratory.

Professor Ronald Li, S Y and H Y Cheng Professor in Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, completed his studies in the 1990s with this take-away: "We learned that the heart cannot be regenerated and that when you have a heart attack and the heart cells are gone, they cannot be replaced."

Today, he is at the forefront of research showing that this seemingly-formidable obstacle can be conquered.

In his native United States, and since 2010 at HKU, Professor Li has been using stem cell technology to regenerate the heart through radical new products, including genetically-engineered heart cells, heart tissues that can act as bandages to repair damage, and a tiny, beating heart that potentially could be developed for human transplantation.

He has overseen the development of these new products with a young, fast-working team

at HKU and international collaborators at Johns Hopkins University, Wyss Institute at Harvard, Mount Sinai Hospital and the University of California, Irvine.

In 2010, Professor Li and his team persuaded the Hong Kong Government to adopt 'Stem Cell' as one of three health-related topics to be funded under the Theme-based Research Scheme (TRS). The following year they secured TRS funding for their own project and developed the mass production of human heart cells, improving yields from 0.5 per cent to 95 per cent. With sufficient raw materials, they were able to assemble the cells into human heart 'sheets' and muscle fibres, and just over a year ago into the 3D mini-heart.

Safer, speedier drug trials

This research is significant not only for heart regeneration, but also, more immediately, for drug research. Many drugs that make it to the

clinical trial stage end up being pulled because of cardiotoxicity – whether they are designed for heart conditions or not.

"We think the reason for this is because of the big jump from testing drugs in small animals, like mice and rats, to testing in humans," he said. "Now, we can use bio-artificial organs instead to screen cardiotoxicity and even discover beneficial effects."

These discoveries mean that rather than testing one drug at a time in patients, drug companies can test multiple compounds and get much more immediate feedback on the effects.

Pointing to red thimble-sized hearts suspended in jars, Professor Li said: "The mini-heart is our most comprehensive tool. It can measure the pressure-volume relationships, contractility, electrical properties, electrocardiogram (ECG), stress test, pharmacological responses – pretty



“ If I take five millilitres of blood from you today, you can come back in three to six months and I will show you a mini-heart pump made from your cells. ”

Professor Ronald Li

much everything the cardiologist would measure in the clinic. But it's not necessarily the best tool for first-level screening because it takes more time. For that we have higher-throughput tools. If you want to look at force, muscle fibres are better. Or if you want to test 50,000 compounds, which we have been asked to do, the miniature 'hair-like' heart muscles are more suitable.

"The other thing is that we can test drugs in an ethnic-specific and disease-specific manner which takes into account genetic differences that result in side effects."

Personalised treatment

Professor Li is also working with international colleagues to create a system of multiple

crucial organs that would be a 'virtual' human for clinical trials.

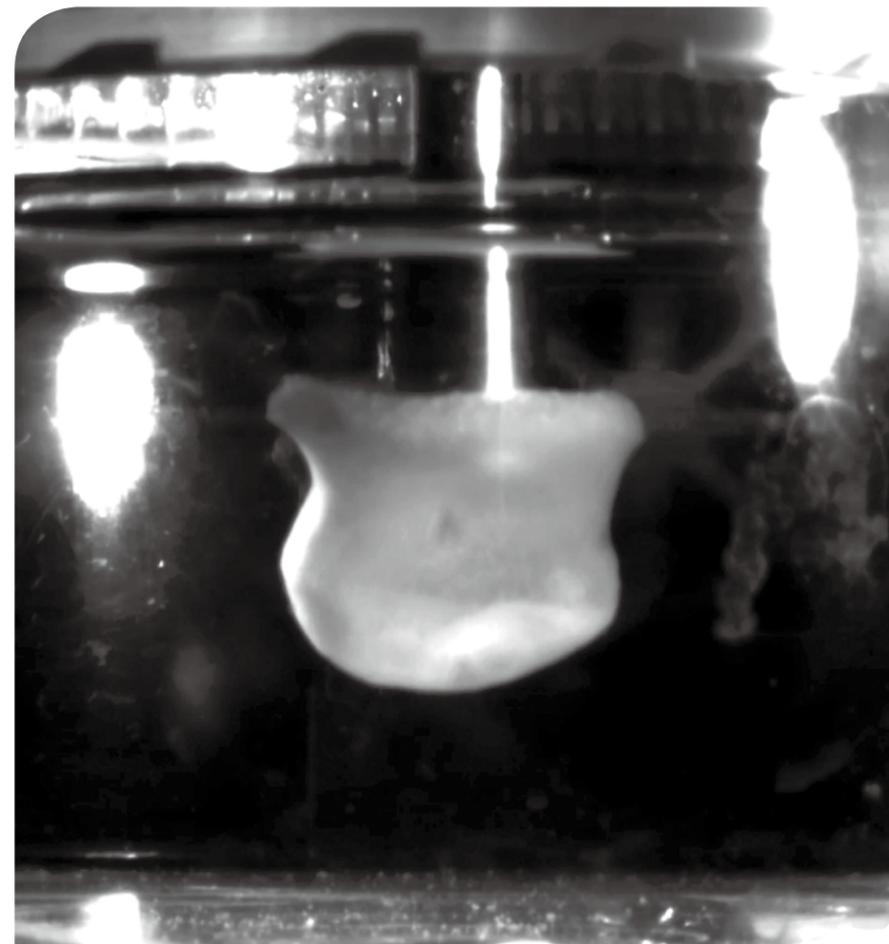
Having introduced these revolutionary tools into drug discovery, the next goal is to develop the prototypes into personalised treatment for patients. This is already very close to reality.

"If I take five millilitres of blood from you today, you can come back in three to six months and I will show you a mini-heart pump made from your cells," he said. "One of our first mini-hearts belongs to an anonymous team member in the laboratory."

But while the science is progressing rapidly, there are political and other non-scientific obstacles to stem cell-derived products. Some countries, such as Japan, are more forward-looking than others.

"I am often asked when we will be able to generate a whole heart. It's an academic question we will continue to address, but for patients to benefit, I don't think we have to wait to fabricate a whole heart. Just a patch can be put on a patient's heart and if that is sufficient to slow down or stop the disease from progressing, it already does most of the job."

For the record, three to five years seems a likely horizon for developing a whole heart in the laboratory. In the meantime, Professor Li's start-up, Novoheart, is working with the drug industry to put the mini-heart and other engineered constructs to use in drug discovery. "Now that we have cells to work with as fundamental building blocks, we can go in and engineer them. It opens up a lot of possibilities," said Professor Li. ■



A bio-artificial human cardiac ventricular chamber or mini-heart.



Extraction from pamphlets in 19th-century China illustrating a child's kidney being removed. (Courtesy of Princeton University Digital Library)

GRISLY RUMOURS AND SECRET SPACES

Tales of Western medical missionaries gouging out the eyes, kidneys and other organs of Chinese were rife in 19th-century China. These rumours were fuelled not only by politics, but also cultural differences about medical practices, privacy and space, says Dr Tian Xiaoli.

Western missionaries who came to China in the 19th century to spread the Gospel and medical know-how may have raised the hackles of Chinese officials over their political intent, but local Chinese villagers were disturbed by something altogether more relevant to their daily lives.

As Dr Tian Xiaoli of the Department of Sociology has shown in her research on rumours, these foreigners brought strange medical practices and occupied space in ways that looked secretive and threatening to local populations. The resulting tensions triggered ugly rumours and exploded into violence,

leading to more than 800 attacks against missionaries.

“Previous scholars have tended to explain Chinese hostility towards foreigners as anti-imperialism or nationalism against the invaders. I’m saying that while that might be true, how does this anti-imperialist sentiment work at the local community level?”

“The most obvious way the missionaries showed themselves to the local people was in the space they occupied, which was different from the Chinese way of understanding space,” said Dr Tian.

Miracles and closed doors

The missionaries introduced new and seemingly miraculous medical procedures, in particular eye surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight. But they took patients into separate rooms for treatment, away from their families, which violated Chinese norms about the visibility of medical practices.

The use of church space was also problematic. Church doors were always closed, contributing to the impression that the missionaries’ practices were not accessible to Chinese. This contrasted with the Buddhist and Daoist



“The missionaries did not think they were doing anything wrong, but the Chinese had their own understanding of what a medical procedure looked like and what practices might be considered secretive, which to them implied evil.”

Dr Tian Xiaoli

temples in the community which were always open. Moreover, women and men worshipped in the same room, which was unheard of in Chinese society.

“The missionaries did not think they were doing anything wrong, but the Chinese had their own understanding of what a medical procedure looked like and what practices might be considered secretive, which to them implied evil,” she said.

While the missionaries were not deliberately being secretive, the collision of different spatial concepts led to ambiguous information, which in turn led to dark speculation. Eye-gouging rumours may have been inspired by the eye surgeries, but other rumours were also common at the time, such as stealing kidneys (which are linked to reproduction in traditional Chinese medicine) and raping women.

led to the deaths of many children and the nuns were seen hastily burying the bodies. It was assumed that happenings in the church killed the children, so mobs attacked. They slaughtered more than 50 foreigners and Chinese converts and burned foreign buildings, including churches, to the ground.

The sensitivity of the case led the Chinese Government to send a leading official, Zeng Guofan, to investigate. He reported that the rumours were false and persuaded the throne to issue an edict declaring this. However, few people accepted the ruling, which led to Zeng’s downfall. Rumours of organ-snatching by missionaries continued to circulate in China up to the 1930s.

“What I’m trying to say about these rumours is that everybody is innocent. The Chinese had reason to believe the missionaries were up to

something, but the missionaries were in fact not trying to hide anything,” she said.

Nonetheless, the persistence and nature of the rumours were evidence that the missionaries’ practices offended deep cultural norms about spatial and medical concepts. Dr Tian said: “If people coined rumours just because they hated foreigners, presumably the rumours would take many different forms; you would expect diverse content. But when you look at the pamphlets, the content is very similar: they all relate to medical practice and space, and how people understood foreigners’ activities.”

Apart from shedding light on anti-missionary sentiments in 19th-century China, Dr Tian’s focus of space also offers a new way of looking at how people respond when two cultures come into contact, and how cultural norms influence their encounters. ■

Tianjin massacre

Dr Tian found evidence of these concerns in an analysis of 207 anti-missionary pamphlets from the 19th century, in which the overwhelming majority mentioned the missionaries’ medical practices and use of space.

Most remarkably, she found that even when the rumours were officially refuted, they did not die down. This happened in the famous Tianjin massacre of 1870, which marked an end to the cooperation between China and the Western treaty powers.

Rumours began circulating that missionaries in Tianjin were buying children and gouging out their eyes to make medicine, after nuns at a Catholic church offered a small reward for bringing homeless or abandoned children to their orphanage. An outbreak of disease then



Extraction from pamphlets in 19th-century China illustrating the practitioners of Christianity gouging out the eyes. (Courtesy of Princeton University Digital Library)

TURNING BAD FAT INTO GOOD FAT

The identification of a protein which is critical to turning white fat to brown fat has implications for the treatment of metabolic diseases.

When it comes to the battle with weight gain, or regulating metabolic imbalance, white fat is the enemy, and brown fat the friend. In adults 90 per cent of body fat consists of white fat, which stores excess energy and leads to weight increase. Brown fat in adults makes up 10 per cent of body fat and when activated can reduce body weight.

“Until recently, scientists thought only infants had brown fat, but now we have discovered that if stimulated by cold, we can actually

activate brown fat in adults,” said Dr Roger Wong Hoi-fung, Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry, who has been working with a research team at the University of California, Berkeley, to identify a new protein critical for the conversion of white fat to brown fat.

“Brown fat is a type of ‘good fat’ if you like,” said Dr Wong. “It burns calories, rather than storing them like white fat, and in the process produces heat.”

The research team’s aim was to utilise the advantages of brown fat by searching for ways to enable the body to preserve, increase and activate brown fat, with the ultimate aim of developing a tool to fight obesity, type 2 diabetes, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and other metabolic diseases.

“We needed to identify a fat-burning gene which can trigger the process of ‘browning’ the white fat which stores excess energy in the body to enable us to resist cold and lose weight,” said Dr Wong. “We were looking for the transcription factor that controls either the formation of brown fat or how white fat can be turned into brown fat. It was like seeking one particular fish in an ocean. In humans there are 30,000 genes.

“There were two possible strategies: one, look at those 30,000 genes individually one by one

and see which one could activate brown fat gene (UCPI); and two, use a super computer to do the bioinformatics. In the end, both approaches produced the same result,” said Dr Wong. “Each identified the protein Zfp516 as the earliest driving force in the formation of brown fat, and discovered that levels of this protein increase during exposure to cold temperatures.”

In experiments where transgenic mice were fed on a high-fat diet, those with higher levels of the Zfp516 protein were found to gain 30 per cent less weight than their counterparts. In addition, extended exposure to cold temperatures (4 degrees Celsius) also triggered the protein. This study has been published in the journal *Molecular Cell*.

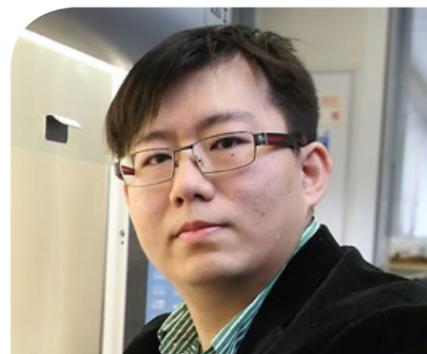
By activating the protein Zfp516 through potential drugs in the future it may be possible to promote weight loss. Berberine, a natural product used in traditional Chinese medicine may activate Zfp516. “It was known previously that Berberine might activate a browning of white fat,” said Dr Wong, “but we didn’t know the mechanism involved. Our research has now explained that.”

Regulating metabolism

The next step is to continue to identify genes involved in both the generation of white fat and the generation of brown fat and to work



The active ingredient in Chinese herbs with Berberine is noted to have the effect of triggering the ‘browning’ of white fat. Dr Wong’s research team looks into its relation with Zfp516 protein.



“ We are seeking to understand the regulatory process, which will give further insight into dealing with metabolic diseases – and not only these but there are implications for heart diseases and some cancers. ”

Dr Roger Wong Hoi-fung

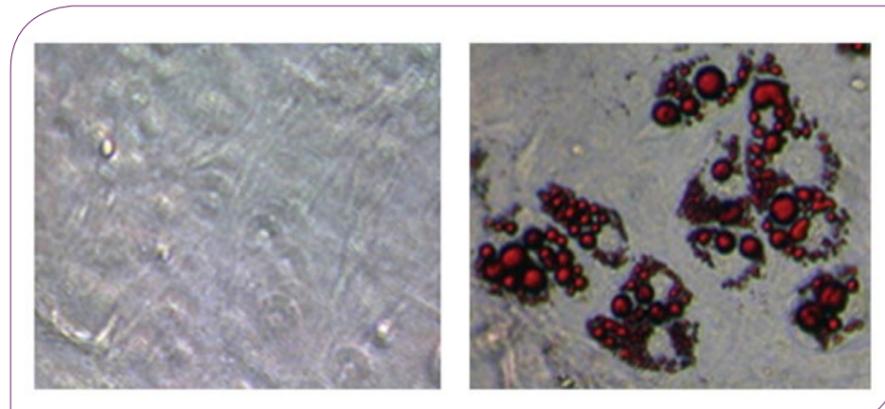
out if it is possible to electively impact the regulation of fat metabolism.

“We are seeking to understand the regulatory process, which will give further insight into

dealing with metabolic diseases – and not only these but there are implications for heart diseases and some cancers. Further, information generated by lipodaemia – which is termed metabolism information – may be

converted into neuro-information and give us insights into Alzheimers and other degenerative neuron diseases.

“For example, we know that people who have type 2 diabetes have a higher risk in less than 10 years of developing Alzheimers or Parkinson’s disease. It is a long process and no one knows what happens in-between. If we can identify what’s in-between – that is, the trigger that sparks Alzheimers or Parkinson’s – may be we can do something about it,” said Dr Wong. ■



The fat-burning gene Zfp516 protein triggers ‘browning’ of white fat. The Oil Red O staining in the above photo indicates the presence of brown fat.

CHINA'S PUZZLING DIPLOMACY

China's behaviour on the United Nations Security Council has sent confusing, even infuriating signals, in particular on Libya and Syria. But political scientist Dr Courtney Fung argues there is logic in China's diplomatic moves.



Instead of blocking the action with a negative vote, Chinese United Nations Ambassador Li Baodong (the right raising hand) voted to abstain from the resolution to authorise a no-fly zone over Libya in the United Nations Security Council in 2011.



“A lot of people write the Chinese off and I can understand that frustration when there are millions of displaced persons and refugees. But the questions the Chinese are asking to me are fair and rational.”

Dr Courtney Fung

China, it has been said, suffers from diplomatic schizophrenia. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), it approved sanctions and a no-fly zone over Libya and an international court referral for Muammar Gaddafi. Yet it has consistently vetoed weaker resolutions against Syria, despite evidence of much human suffering. What is going on?

One popular explanation is that China's actions are motivated by economic interest. It had more investments and people in Libya, therefore it decided to act there.

But to Dr Courtney Fung of the Department of Politics and Public Administration, that explanation is too simplistic. She has been studying China's response to humanitarian interventions over the past 40 years and sees a far more complex picture than the self-serving motivations ascribed by others.

“Some say it's a strict economic, rational calculation of how to get the biggest payoff,” she said, “but I don't find that very persuasive. I

think there is also an issue of identity that the Chinese are grappling with.

“As they assume great power status, they have had to accept, over time, that there are these greater responsibilities for securing international peace and security.

“At the same time, they also think of themselves as a developing state. A lot of developing countries are very reluctant to have any type of intervention since that is all about violating sovereignty, and sovereignty is their last defence. So the Chinese have this internal dual identity struggle.”

Libya vs Syria

That struggle has played out in China's differing responses to Libya and Syria. Actions against Libya had regional support from the League of Arab States, the African Union and the like – organisations that China saw as representing fellow developing countries. This, together with China's assets and workers in Libya, probably influenced its support of sanctions, she said.

In the case of Syria, regional players did not coordinate their position until late in the day. More importantly, China had learned from the Libya experience that sanctions could lead to regime change – something China does not support.

“There is a sense of learning – we got duped once, we won't be duped again. China is also drawing a line in the sand and telling the United States, Britain and France [also permanent members of the UNSC, with China and Russia] that you can't run wild reforming the world.”

On the latter point, China may also be motivated by its own fears about a Colour Revolution or Umbrella Movement on the Mainland, Dr Fung said. Nonetheless, the country raises important questions about the effectiveness of sanctions.

“China doesn't see how this one-sided criticism or use of sanctions will fix a broken state. Look at the record – Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Afghanistan, these are not positive stories. China is saying, if you are going to impose sanctions or go in,

what is your strategy? Are you really in it for the long run? Brazil, India, Germany and South Africa have all raised the same concerns.

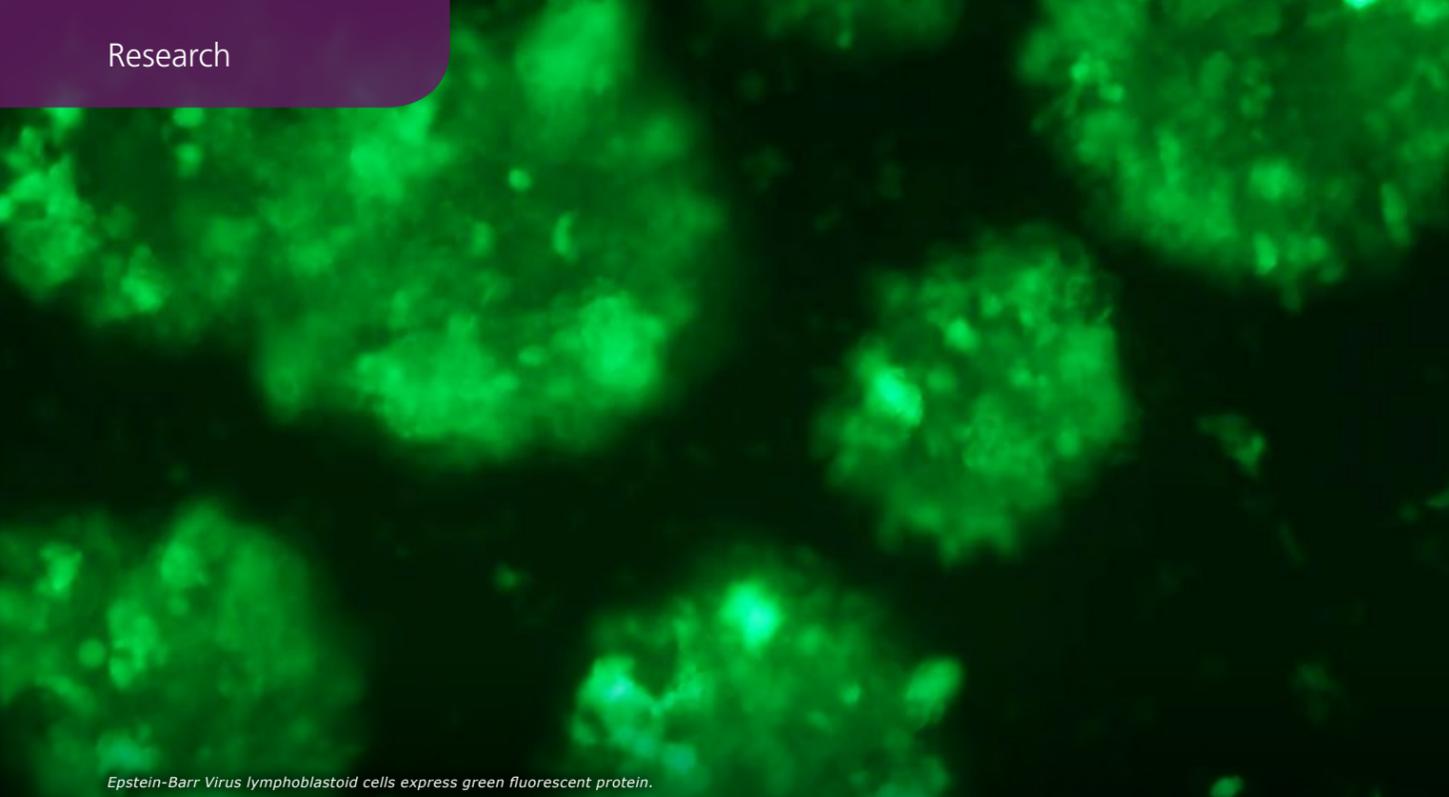
“A lot of people write the Chinese off and I can understand that frustration when there are millions of displaced persons and refugees. But the questions the Chinese are asking to me are fair and rational, and in that sense they are being very responsible. Unfortunately it comes at the cost of spinning wheels because veto votes take the United Nations out of having an effective response in Syria.”

China has come a long way

Still, the situation serves as a positive sign that China is stepping up to the plate on the global stage. In the 1970s, China's United Nations representative was nicknamed ‘Ambassador Look-out-the-Window’ because of the country's near total lack of engagement. In the 1980s and 1990s it began to cast votes, even if they were mostly abstentions, and to explain itself. This was followed by some guarded ‘yes’ votes and, in the last 10 years, a less reactive stance.

“My two biggest bugbears are this criticism that there's something exotic or difficult about what the Chinese are doing, and that this knee-jerk reaction is all to do with money. It goes into the much larger debate about what is the rise of China and is it going to be necessarily bad.

“China is too big now to be sitting on the sidelines looking out the window. It's better to have them engaged. Even if you don't like what they are saying, at least they are saying something,” Dr Fung said. ■



Epstein-Barr Virus lymphoblastoid cells express green fluorescent protein.

NEW APPLICATION OF AN OLD DRUG

The discovery that an existing drug can control Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV)-induced tumours in humanised mice may open the fast-lane to a novel therapeutic treatment.

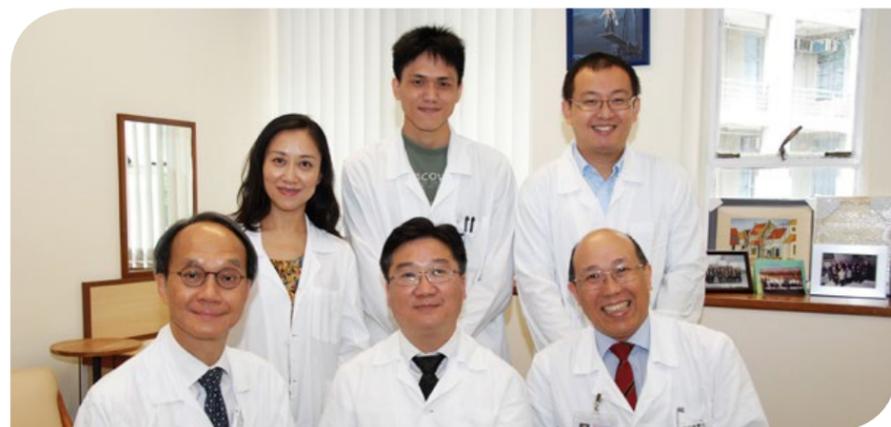
Some 95 per cent of adults have the Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV) present in their bodies. For the vast majority of those, it is latent, and most will never know anything about it. EBV only becomes active when the body is immunocompromised, but when it does it can lead to EBV tumours and the mortality rate is high.

Current treatment options are limited and far from ideal since side effects are significant. But now an international research team led by Dr Tu Wenwei, Associate Professor in the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, has discovered that an existing drug, pamidronate, which is currently used to treat bone diseases such as osteoporiasis, can control EBV-induced B cell lymphoproliferative disorders (EBV-LPD). The discovery has been published in the prestigious international scientific journal, *Cancer Cell*.

Epstein-Barr Virus is a herpes virus that latently infects human B cells in most individuals by

adulthood. However, effect immunocompromised patients – for example those who have had an organ transplant – are at high risk of developing EBV tumours such as EBV-LPD. Current treatments destroy all the B cells, not just the infected ones.

“We wanted to identify only EBV-infected cells,” said Dr Tu, “to target the gamma-delta T cells. We thought that if we could use ‘forceful energies’ such as pamidronate, then we could enhance the immunity of the gamma-delta T cells.”



The research team at the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine – (first row from left) Professor Lau Yu-lung, Doris Zimmern Professor in Community Child Health and Chair Professor of Paediatrics; Dr Tu Wenwei, Associate Professor; Professor Godfrey Chan Chi-fung, Tsao Yen-Chow Professor in Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, Clinical Professor and Head of the Department; (second row from left) Dr Liu Yinping, Dr Zheng Jian and Mr Zheng Xiang.



“As pamidronate has already been used for decades in the treatment of osteoporiasis, this ‘new application of an old drug’ potentially offers a safe and readily available option for the treatment of Epstein-Barr Virus-induced tumours.”

Dr Tu Wenwei

The team established a lethal EBV-LPD model with characteristics mimicking the human disease in humanised mice. They found that pamidronate effectively prevented EBV-LPD development and induced EBV-induced tumour regression in the mice by boosting the immunity of gamma-delta T cells. All the control mice developed solid tumours and nine of 11 control mice died within 60 days, while in the treatment group only two of 10 mice developed solid tumours and nine of 10 mice survived for more than 100 days.

“The discovery has provided the proof-of-principle for a novel immune therapeutic approach, using pamidronate to control EBV-induced tumours by boosting human gamma-delta T cell immunity in the humanised mouse model,” said Dr Tu. More recently, the

clinical implication of this new approach has been intensively discussed and highlighted in a commentary published in *New England Journal of Medicine*, a top clinical medical journal.

Humanised mice crucial

The use of ‘humanised mice’, which have the complete human immune system, was a crucial element of the research. “We can mimic human diseases in these mice, and see how their human immune cells react to treatment,” said Dr Tu. “EBV cannot infect normal mice cells, so our humanised mice have been vital in linking the gap to enable this research.”

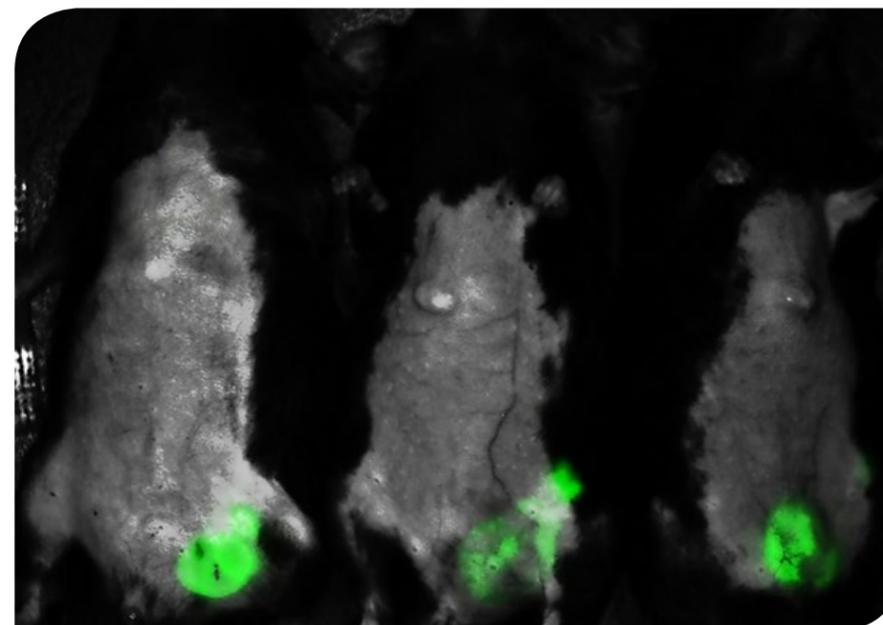
Since returning HKU from Stanford nine years ago, Dr Tu led his team to spend three years establishing the humanised mice in Hong Kong.

His laboratory is one of the very few laboratories worldwide to have successfully established this humanised mouse model.

Using humanised mice has also given the team the edge over other biotechnology researchers who are using real mice for their studies. “For them there is a still a big gap between pre-clinical and human trials,” said Dr Tu, “and the transition may not be smooth. Using humanised mice shortens that gap. We expect to start human trials this year, and we want to start quickly as now this research has been published, other medical centres are likely to follow our breakthrough.”

That pamidronate is an existing drug which people have been taking on a long-term basis without problems, gives the team other advantages too. “As pamidronate has already been used for decades in the treatment of osteoporiasis, this ‘new application of an old drug’ potentially offers a safe and readily available option for the treatment of EBV-induced tumours,” said Dr Tu. “Potentially, we can save a lot of money and a lot of time. Usually for a brand new drug, from bench to clinic takes about 10 to 12 years and approximately US\$1.5 billion. We expect both the time and the costs to be greatly reduced.”

In addition to an extensive team of experts from the Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, the research team also included HKU researchers in anatomy and microbiology and international collaborators from Mainland China and France. ■



Fluorescent whole body image of mice with Epstein-Barr Virus-induced B cell lymphoproliferative disorders (EBV-LPD), with tumour cells highlighted in green.



GROWTH INDUSTRY

The recent discovery of a new plant species that is endemic to Hong Kong is a reminder that there is more to this city than concrete jungle and that its green areas need to be protected.

Fruits of *Thismia hongkongensis*. The lowermost fruit is nearing maturity, with the top beginning to disintegrate to reveal the seeds inside. (Courtesy of Mar Shek-shing)



“ We’re discovering new things about the local environment – things of global relevance – using local habitats as an experimental location for research of broader significance. ”

Professor Richard Saunders

Occupying an area of just four square metres in Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve, and growing for much of the year underground, the new plant species – *Thismia hongkongensis* – could easily have been overlooked. It was noticed by keen amateur biologist Mar Shek-shing from the Society of Hong Kong Nature Explorers and described by the School of Biological Sciences’ Professor Richard Saunders. *Thismia hongkongensis* is most closely related to a species from Myanmar that was last collected over 170 years ago.

In 22 years at HKU Professor Saunders has described around 70 new species, so such discoveries are not rare. “What sets this new plant apart,” he said, “is, firstly, that it is only known from Hong Kong, raising questions about what else lays undiscovered in our forests; and, secondly, the nature of the plant itself – which is very unusual, and belongs to a genus whose pollination ecology we know little about.

“This brings the whole conservation angle to the fore. There is a lot of debate in political circles at the moment about developing new housing in country parks, but we should be extremely careful before we disrupt any natural environment as we don’t know what we are going to lose.”

His is not a lone voice in the wilderness – public reaction to the discovery has been huge. An *Apple Daily* article about the new species received 135,000 online hits within days. Professor Saunders is encouraged by people’s interest in Hong Kong’s natural environment.

“At the School of Biological Sciences we have a strong research ethic in ecology and biodiversity, which involves describing species, including new species, and putting them into their evolutionary context in order to reconstruct the evolutionary tree of life and

infer how species are related to each other. We’re discovering new things about the local environment – things of global relevance – using local habitats as an experimental location for research of broader significance.”

Biologically interesting

Thismia hongkongensis is biologically an extremely unusual species and it poses a number of very interesting questions. The plant’s highly reduced anatomy makes it difficult for biologists to understand its broader evolutionary relationships. Professor Saunders’ research students use DNA sequencing data to place organisms in the tree of life and as a basis for developing research hypotheses.

Most plants are autotrophic [able to create their own food] but a small number, including this one, have abandoned that mode of nutrition and obtain food from decaying matter on the forest floor. Plants can’t do that directly so they have a symbiotic relationship with fungi, and the fungi obtain the food from the decaying matter: the plant is able to ‘cultivate’ the fungus as a way of obtaining the food.

“It is a bizarre-looking plant,” said Professor Saunders, “very small, and it doesn’t have green foliage but it does have a highly complex floral anatomy – the flowers are small but elaborate, with tentacles on the top, and an enclosed chamber with pendant stamens.

“There are about 40 species in this genus, but no one knows how it is pollinated,” he continued. “What’s interesting is that when we saw them in the field we didn’t see any insect life around them, but when we dissected them in the laboratory in order to describe the structure, we found a number of dead flies inside. These flies were identified by expert entomologists as belonging to two families of fly – fungus gnats and scuttle flies –

tiny flies which are attracted to decaying vegetation. This is the first indication that these might be the pollinators.”

After it has been fertilised, the flower develops into the fruit, which is cup-shaped. At maturity the top of the fruit decays, revealing a cup-like structure with exposed seeds surrounded by a gelatinous coating. There is no empirical evidence about how this structure works, but the speculation is that seeds are dispersed by raindrops which fall into the cups, causing the seeds to splash out.

Finding empirical evidence is the next step for Professor Saunders and his research students. Most of the year the species exists underground, only becoming visible at all when it emerges to flower and fruit, so in the next flowering season they will go back to Tai Po Kau and try to gather more data about pollination and seed dispersal of *Thismia hongkongensis*. ■



Flower of *Thismia hongkongensis*, showing petal lobes with elongated tentacles that cross over the floral aperture. (Courtesy of Mar Shek-shing)



香港大學
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

193rd Congregation

第一百九十三屆學位頒授典禮



From left: Pro-Chancellor Dr the Honourable Sir David Li Kwok-po, Dr the Honourable Henry Hu Hung-lick, President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson and Council Chairman Dr Leong Che-hung.

ENLIGHTENING THE EAGER

Dr the Honourable Henry Hu has devoted his life to the law, education and to giving back. In recognition of his contributions to so many aspects of society, HKU has conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences *honoris causa*.

"Learn to see things from others' perspectives and put your own self-interest last." This is the philosophy of Dr the Honourable Henry Hu Hung-lick, the 95-year-old academic, lawyer, scholar and life-long philanthropist who was conferred with an Honorary Degree at HKU's 193rd Congregation. Also the Founder of Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Dr Hu pioneered the development in the city of private higher education at a time when there was an acute shortage of tertiary places available, particularly for those from lower income families.

His acceptance speech was delivered on his behalf by Professor Hu Yaosu, one of Dr Hu's two sons, both of whom continue to provide

administrative and academic leadership at their parents' beloved Shue Yan University.

Dr Hu said: "I have great pleasure in accepting the award as it gives me the opportunity to reflect from the vantage point of my 95 years, on the changes I have observed in Hong Kong during the past six decades when it has been my home, at the intersection between those areas where I have been most actively involved: the law, politics and higher education; areas that have again been under the spotlight in Hong Kong since October, 2014."

Born in Zhejiang province in 1920, Dr Hu studied Law and Diplomacy, as well as Russian, so that he could begin a diplomatic career in

Tashkent, in today's Uzbekistan. He and his new wife Dr Chung Chi-yung then went to France where he studied Law and International Affairs, before moving to England to study for the Bar. He was admitted to Middle Temple in 1954 and then relocated to Hong Kong where Dr Chung pursued an academic life and Dr Hu practised at the Bar – something he would continue to do until his mid-80s.

Social issues

He also devoted his time to public service, serving on both the Legislative and Urban Councils. At all times, Dr Hu and his wife were concerned about social issues and in 1971 they founded Shue Yan College, with the aim of



Professor Peter Mathieson (left) warmly congratulates Dr the Honourable Henry Hu Hung-lick.



Pro-Chancellor Dr the Honourable Sir David Li Kwok-po confers the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences honoris causa upon Dr the Honourable Henry Hu Hung-lick.

“ To survive and thrive in the decade to come, Shue Yan must yet again make hard choices and take decisions that are both principled and pragmatic about how we can best continue to serve the Hong Kong community by playing to our strengths in areas of need. ”

Dr the Honourable Henry Hu Hung-lick

providing a liberal arts education founded on Confucian values and placing particular emphasis on Chinese culture. They used their own money to fund the college, which in 1976 gained government recognition as a private tertiary institution. Accredited with university status since 2006, the Hong Kong Shue Yan University is still the HKSAR's only private university.

Sadly Dr Chung passed away last year, and in his speech Dr Hu recalled their time together, particularly the sometimes difficult early years of the college which he described as being 'steep, thorny and solitary'. He said: "With the dedication of staff, students and supporters, who recognised the value of a Shue Yan education, we were able to stick to our principles, adopt an independent stance that

was at odds with government policy and survive until policy changed again and paved the way for us to move forward to achieving our goal of a University title."

He added that the University faces challenges ahead, particularly a predicted over-supply of places in self-financing institutions, resulting from a demographic downturn. "To survive and thrive in the decade to come, Shue Yan must yet again make hard choices and take decisions that are both principled and pragmatic about how we can best continue to serve the Hong Kong community by playing to our strengths in areas of need," he said.

Professor Hu finished the speech by sharing his nonagenarian father's philosophy for a long life – "remaining active, both intellectually and physically" – and quoting his favourite Confucian sayings on the matter: "This is the character of the man so intent upon enlightening the eager that he forgets his hunger, and so happy in doing so, that he forgets the bitterness of his lot and does not realise that old age is at hand." ■



Professor Hu Yaosu delivers the acceptance speech on behalf of his father.



HELPING THE HELPERS

HKU students and academic Mr David Bishop are involved in a social enterprise that aims to improve the lot of Hong Kong's domestic workers and, ultimately, migrant workers around the globe.

Migrant workers in Hong Kong are vulnerable to abuse, as the recent horrific stories about abused maid Erwiana Sulistyansih and two murdered Indonesian sex workers showed. But they could be made safer by one simple step: remove the burden of illegal debt they owe to agencies that place them with employers.

These agencies often charge exorbitant fees, manipulate situations to keep the women in debt, and even confiscate passports. This makes it difficult for the women to walk away from abusive employers. Now, a new enterprise co-founded by Mr David Bishop, Principal Lecturer in the School of Business, is providing help – and also a teaching opportunity for HKU students.

The Fair Employment Agency (FEA) is a social enterprise agency that charges employers but not helpers a fee for the search and paperwork involved. Everything is transparent so helpers

do not start with debt, and employers are matched with helpers who can meet their needs, such as experience with children or the elderly.

"I've worked on domestic helper issues for a long time and I wanted to do something that would address the problem of agency fees from a prevention perspective," Mr Bishop said. "I am also interested in building a business model that employs students and provides them with leadership training because they do not get many opportunities to lead and do things that are challenging."

FEA had its soft opening in September, 2014 and has already secured enough clients and donations to break even. Multinational corporations are particularly interested because many of their staff employ domestic helpers and the issue touches on corporate social responsibility.

Learning in the real world

Students have played a central role in developing the business, under the guidance of Mr Bishop, former Asia Regional CEO of Grameen Bank Ms Jennifer Meehan, former consultant Ms Tammy Balz and American finance graduate Mr Scott Stiles. About 45 students have participated so far as part of a credit-bearing social venture internship course. They hold senior positions in FEA, such as directors of marketing, human resources and information technology, and do hands-on work such as talking with domestic workers and consular staff and creating publications and videos.

Ms Kate Chan, a third-year BBA(Law) student, said she gained a fresh perspective on business. "In class, we usually learn from successful examples like Apple, not start-ups and small businesses. Here we had to get our



“ I am also interested in building a business model that employs students and provides them with leadership training because they do not get many opportunities to lead and do things that are challenging. ”

Mr David Bishop

hands dirty. I had to write a business plan and approach different foundations seeking funds. Instead of looking at examples from the past, I had to look to the future," she said.

Their efforts also had to function in the real world, said Ms Vivian Seo, a second-year BBA(Acc&Fin) student. "The marketing materials we made were used at the official launch [in February] and I had to learn how to open a press conference. We also used a lot of social media, which may seem obvious but you have to know when to tweet and when to re-tweet, and you have to get the terms right. We are really part of the business."

Bettering society

Mr Bishop also wanted students to realise they could make a positive change in society. "We're trying to provide a platform that is not only a successful social business, but also shows you don't have to focus only on the bottom line because the aim of business is to make society better."

The message came through loud and clear for Mr Jeremy Lam, a third-year BBA(IGM) student: "Before I did this, I thought social



Thousands of migrant domestic helpers in Hong Kong spending their holidays with friends and relatives in Central every Sunday.

ventures were about hiring underprivileged people. Now I see that business can do much more – you can establish a whole market and start to eliminate ethical problems in society."

FEA itself has bigger visions beyond helping Hong Kong's migrant workers. There are millions of migrant workers in Asia labouring in such industries as construction, hospitality and entertainment, many of them at risk of exploitation through such practices as illegal placement fees. Mr Bishop said they had

ambitions to help them, too.

In the meantime, they are focussed on making FEA succeed and reaching out to governments. The February launch included representatives from the Hong Kong, Indonesian, Philippine and Thai governments. "We have proven our model can work and now it needs to grow and expand. It's not something we expect to make money from, but in five or 10 years' time, people will ask why we didn't do this before," he said. ■



Students play key roles in developing Fair Employment Agency. Ms Kate Chan, a third-year BBA(Law) student, was the Master of Ceremonies of the launch which was attended by over 90 community, government, and business leaders.



From left: The Honourable Emily Lau Wai-hing, Legislative Council member, Mr David Bishop, and a domestic helper at the launch of Fair Employment Agency.



K-POPULAR!

Korean pop music and dramas are a huge hit in Hong Kong. They are also driving strong demand for HKU's Korean Studies programme.

Hong Kong's seemingly insatiable demand for all things Korean is having some positive knock-on effects for HKU's Korean Studies programme. The classes are so popular that supply cannot keep up with demand.

In 2012 Dr Kim Su-yun arrived to head up the programme and expand its focus from just language to combined language and area studies. Demand was strong and rising so she got approval to double staff and student numbers, to six staff and about 600 students today. But that has still not been enough. Nearly one of every two course applicants is turned away. Further growth in both staff and student numbers is therefore planned.

"This boom in popularity is probably a combination of two things," she said. "First,

we offer the only Korean Studies programme in Hong Kong, which I was quite shocked to discover when I came here because of all the connections between Hong Kong and Korea. And second, the popularity of Korean culture has attracted more students.

"Students come into our classes thinking Korean pop music (K-pop) is cool, and they know all these little phrases from Korean dramas. What we're doing in this programme is turning that interest around and saying, look at the Korean family dynamic. There may be some similarities with Hong Kong's, but the gender issues are different. This leads to discussions about things like family relationships, the history of Korean patriarchy and Confucian tradition. We can still focus on K-pop – one student did a capstone research

paper on it – but it has to be done from an academic perspective."

A window and a mirror

Ms Chen Ting, a first-year Arts student, was one of those whose interest sprang from Korean pop music and television dramas. On arriving at HKU, she decided out of curiosity to take a course in Korean language. "I want to study the history and culture and know more deeply about Korea. I have started to think of having a career related to Korea after I graduate," she said.

For Ms Vivian Chui Wai-lam, also a first-year Arts student, Korean Studies was a major reason why she decided to study at HKU. Her



“ Learning about a foreign country, whether it's Korea or Japan or France, makes you think about your own society. It gives you a better understanding of who you are and where you've come from. ”

Dr Kim Su-yun

interest began with K-pop six years ago and has led to a fascination with everything about the country. "This course is deepening our knowledge about Korean culture, society, history and customs and helping us to recognise the differences between Korean culture and our own," she said.

This is one of the goals of the programme – to provide both a window into another world and a mirror to reflect on. Dr Kim experienced something similar herself when she studied French in her native Korea. That led her to become more interested in French literature and culture, and to discover to her surprise that France was an imperialist country – something that resonates in Korea given its occupation last century by Japan.

"Learning about a foreign country, whether it's Korea or Japan or France, makes you think about your own society. It gives you a better understanding of who you are and where you've come from.

"This semester I have been focussing on social change and social movements. Student consciousness was very important in Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, and there are even elements of it there today. My Hong Kong students have responded to that – they went through the Umbrella Movement last year, so they have a better understanding of these things now."

Research is a focus, too

Apart from teaching undergraduates, Dr Kim is also advancing knowledge about Korea through a research postgraduate programme and her own scholarly work. She recently was awarded a General Research Fund Early Career Scheme Award to look at romance and family themes in popular Korean fiction in the last century. This genre has been ignored by

scholars because it is not 'high fiction', but it thrived during Korea's colonisation when overtly political themes were taboo. Dr Kim wants to trace its influence on modern Korean film and drama.

She is also part of a project with Dr Lin Peiyin of the School of Chinese and co-authors in Japan and the United States to compare the

film and literature of Taiwan and Korea. Both countries were colonised by the Japanese and later came under strong American influence. The project recently received funding from the Louis Cha Fund in the Faculty of Arts, and its goal echoes that of her Korean Studies programme: "We want to compare and see what is similar and what is different," Dr Kim said. ■



Award-winning Korean novelist Shin Kyung-sook was invited to a book sharing session held by the Korean Studies programme.



Students promoting the Korean Studies programme on HKU's Information Day.



Students from the Architectural Conservation programme at Yangon Field Study. (Courtesy of Ian Babbitt)

HELPING MYANMAR BLOSSOM

Now in its second year, StudioMYANMAR is a major initiative by the Faculty of Architecture to promote cross-cultural understanding among architecture students and professionals and to give them a sense of global citizenry through helping a developing nation.

The main aims of StudioMYANMAR, which was launched in late 2013 by Architecture Dean Professor Chris Webster, are to provide Architecture, Conservation, Planning and Landscape students with "challenging learning opportunities, to enhance HKU's role as leading university in the region... and to provide opportunities for students to engage in socially responsible projects in the developing country of Myanmar and learn the positive value of global citizenship."

Said Professor Webster: "I would like, all of our undergraduates to have the opportunity to spend one semester in a fast-developing city like Shanghai, one of the most sophisticated globalised cities in the world, as well as having work experience in Yangon, which is at the other end of the development spectrum."

In 2014, the Faculty ran four major projects in Myanmar – studios in Landscape Design, Architectural Conservation, Architecture and Sustainable Design and Architectural

Infrastructure. It also conducted field trips and offered lectures to local professionals and students. Four major projects are planned for this year.

"We had a 10-day Architecture Studio in Yangon in November," said Professor Webster. "Our students worked with local architects from

the Yangon Heritage Trust on energy-efficient design projects that sought to adapt some of Yangon's iconic early-19th-century colonial buildings."

Projects included planning how to better conserve and enhance an old railway building – a real project being undertaken by consultant



Construction underway in Yangon's historic district brings opportunities and threats.



“ We hope this will be a partnership that becomes important to the city as it develops and has some small impact on the Yangon enjoyed by many future generations. ”

Professor Chris Webster

architects in the city. The HKU students got to talk to stakeholders and investigate the site and were asked to produce their own designs based on the real brief. "They were mimicking the exercise being undertaken by qualified architects," said Professor Webster. "If students produced something the client liked, there would be some chance of it being incorporated in the built project."

The group also focussed on low energy, low carbon-emitting design techniques and they partnered with Hong Kong firm of architects LWK, which worked with them on surveying and visualisation, including 3D modelling. One exercise required a drone fly-past over the city, which enabled the students to donate aerial pictures to government agencies in Yangon – which they did not have before.

Projects this year include a Landscape Planning Studio entitled Design on the Road to Burma, led by Assistant Professors Mr Ashley Scott Kelly and Ms Dorothy Tang, during which 19 landscape architecture undergraduates travelled from Thailand to Myanmar to study regional planning of the Dawei-Kanchanaburi corridor and Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Prior to going, the group spent five weeks producing a 200-page research report, comprising maps, timelines and diagrams which contextualise the SEZ across industry,

investment, land rights, ethnic conflicts and environmental conservation. While there, students presented their work to international organisations including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Dawei Development Association. Students will now speculate on designs for this internationally strategic development corridor.

The Faculty has made a multi-year commitment to working on the environmental design of Yangon, with a focus on the Central Business District and colonial quarter along the Yangon River. The area has been earmarked for development and is likely to rapidly become a high-density glitzy commercial and hotel district. But the students are imagining a different plan – one that is being supported by the Yangon Heritage Trust and that would conserve many more of the heritage buildings in this globally unique area and see an altogether greener and more culturally rich modern Yangon.

Ecologically sound

"Students took portions of city centre riverfront and developed landscape plans in anticipation of the area becoming a world-class heritage site within the next 10 years," said Professor Webster. "The objective was to

introduce issues of regional landscape planning in the context of a dynamic urban environment and to develop ecologically sound strategies. They returned to Hong Kong and produced a fantastic suite of designs."

Representatives from Yangon Heritage Trust and from Yangon Technological University – one of the Faculty's partners in StudioMYANMAR – came to HKU to give students feedback on those designs.

"This is a two-way programme," said the Dean. "Our students learn a huge amount about Yangon, about architecture, planning and design in the real and constrained world of a country like Myanmar. They learn about themselves and about their counterpart students. We can offer freshness of view and ideas and perspectives from the wider world. We hope this will be a partnership that becomes important to the city as it develops and has some small impact on the Yangon enjoyed by many future generations. Right now the Faculty is waiting for a Memorandum of Understanding with Yangon Technological University to be signed by the Minister of Education in the country's new capital. Once this is in place we can think about extending our StudioMYANMAR to other Departments and other Faculties." ■



HKU students meeting with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Myanmar in Yangon.



HKU students presenting preliminary research to colleagues at Yangon Technological University.



STICKING TO HIS GUMS

Almost every person may be affected by gum disease in their lifetime. Professor Jin Lijian from the Faculty of Dentistry has been crusading globally for better gum care and oral health.



“ This is a ‘silent’ disease that eats at your gum tissue and destroys the bones around your teeth. When you notice your teeth starting to fall out and drift, it’s too late. ”

Professor Jin Lijian

If the gums were to have a cheerleader, it could very well be Professor Jin Lijian, Modern Dental Laboratory Professor in Clinical Dental Science. He has been researching gum disease including gingivitis and periodontitis for nearly 30 years and chairs the Science Committee of the FDI (Fédération Dentaire Internationale) World Dental Federation in Geneva, which represents over one million dentists. Getting word out about the seriousness of gum disease is a top priority.

“Gum disease is arguably the most common disease in humans. More than 90 per cent of Hong Kong people get gum disease at some point in their lives,” he said. But even dentists may have relatively low awareness of the problem.

“Unlike caries [tooth decay], this is a ‘silent’ disease that eats at your gum tissue and destroys the bones around your teeth. When you notice your teeth starting to fall out and drift, it’s too late. Oral health awareness and prevention and early oral care are the key.”

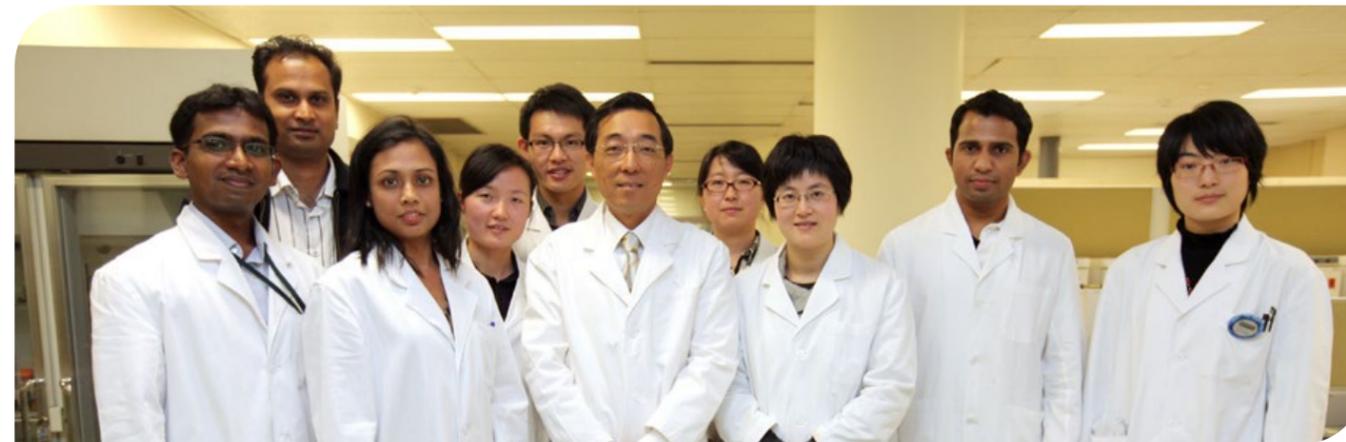
What’s worse, gum disease can affect our overall health. Research over the last couple of decades has linked gum disease with various systemic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, respiratory disease, some forms of cancers, pre-term birth and dementia.

“Gum disease significantly contributes to an elevated level of systemic inflammation,” Professor Jin said. Harmful bacteria can attach to and even invade the soft tissues, and induce an abnormal inflammatory response. This can resonate through the body when the bacteria and their toxins spread from the mouth to infect other tissues and organs, and when the inflammation triggers the liver to produce yet more inflammatory molecules.

Getting the word out

Effective gum disease treatment can reduce systemic inflammation, but it is easier said than done, he said. The bacteria tend to colonise into plaque biofilms, which are difficult to eradicate. Once these affect the tissue and trigger the destructive gum inflammation of periodontitis, daily brushing and flossing are not enough to control the problem and professional care is needed.

Professor Jin’s work with the FDI has involved getting the word out to the world’s dentists and bringing them up to speed on the latest scientific evidence. His committee oversees the issuing of policy statements on evidence-based dentistry and major oral health issues to dentists from about 135 member countries. He was also involved in informing governments and healthcare workers about the global gum



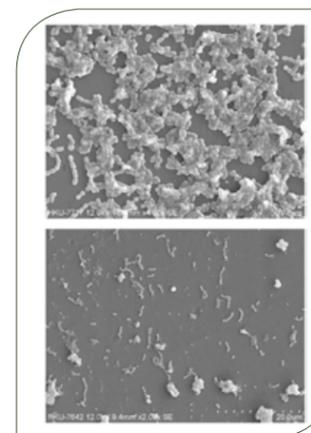
Professor Jin (fifth from right) and his research students.

disease profile and ill effects of poor oral health on general health, when he chaired the task group on the global impact of gum disease of the International Association for Dental Research, a leading academic organisation, from 2009 to 2012.

Professor Jin has also contributed to research on gum disease. His team is currently working on a major project to identify new products to control the problem. A recent study applied nanotechnology to successfully improve the antimicrobial efficacy of chlorhexidine, which is commonly used by dentists to stop the growth of harmful bacteria in the mouth. Silica nanoparticles quickly absorbed pure chlorhexidine, which was then slowly released

so that even after three days, it still effectively controlled stubborn and harmful mixed bacterial biofilms. This was much more effective than the conventional mouth rinse with chlorhexidine, which has only six to 10 hours of effectiveness, and he hopes to develop it for patient use.

Professor Jin noted that healthier gums contribute not only to the overall physical health of an ageing population, but also to people’s psychological health. “A healthy smile is important for self-esteem. After improving your oral health, you can uphold your spirits and improve your quality of life. That is something money can’t match.” ■



Chlorhexidine-containing nanoparticles effectively against the oral bacterial biofilms of *S. sobrinus*, *F. nucleatum* and *P. gingivalis* (lower). No effects of the blank nanoparticles on these bacteria (upper). (Photos used under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Generic License. Source: Seneviratne CJ et al. PLoS ONE 9(8): e103234)



Expert advice

Gum disease usually starts with gingivitis, in which the gums become inflamed with swelling and redness. This is very common among all age groups, even adolescents. If left untreated, it can progress over time into periodontitis, which destroys tooth-supporting tissue and bone and is the major cause of tooth loss in adults worldwide. Professor Jin offers this advice for maintaining healthy gums and teeth:

1. See your dentist at least once a year to prevent and treat emerging problems at an early stage.
2. Brush properly with fluoride toothpaste. The Bass brushing technique is recommended (demonstration videos can be found online). Try to brush your teeth correctly in a relaxed setting, so you don’t feel rushed and can spend three or four minutes on this task twice a day.
3. Floss and use interdental brushes daily, to remove dental plaque between teeth.
4. Control the common risk factors of oral and general health, such as smoking and excessive intake of sugar and alcohol.
5. If you have dental implants, this advice is just as important if not more so, since most implant patients have lost their teeth due to severe gum disease.



Fever: The History of Malaria in Hong Kong will run at the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences till July 26.

HONG KONG'S MALARIA-RIDDEN PAST

SARS and bird flu put Hong Kong on the global health map in recent times, but not so long ago the city was a hotbed of another, much more common scourge: malaria. A new exhibition tells the story.

Dr Ria Sinha, who is a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Centre for the Humanities and Medicine (CHM), is uniquely able to understand both the science and history of malaria: she studied the mosquito-borne parasite for her PhD at Imperial College and is investigating China's role in global public health, particularly in relation to malaria in Africa. But surprisingly, when she arrived here 18 months ago, she had no idea that malaria had ever been a problem in Hong Kong.

It was only during a tour of the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences that Dr Sinha began to get an inkling her speciality also had a Hong Kong connection. In one corner was an old laboratory sink with tell-tale purple marks from staining slides of the malaria parasite.

"I hadn't given any thought to malaria in Hong Kong," she said, "but I started to investigate and I discovered it had been a big problem here."

With that discovery was born an idea to use her knowledge and the materials at hand for an exhibition titled *Fever: The History of Malaria in Hong Kong*, co-presented by the CHM and Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences and funded by the Knowledge Exchange Fund.

From rampant to rare

Drawing on detailed medical records that were kept by the British from their arrival in 1841, Dr Sinha has pieced together a story of a rampant disease and the methodical and strenuous efforts to control it – bridging past and present with such artefacts as old photographs, old laboratory slides, mosquito nets, stuffed toy models and even accompanying theme music composed by a postgraduate student.

Malaria was endemic in Hong Kong in the 19th century. It killed 24 per cent of troops and 10 per cent of civilians in 1843, and many local

and British patients in the decades ahead. But it was a poorly understood disease and the diagnosis of 'Hong Kong fever' became a catchall for various diseases, most of which were probably malaria.



A fever deaths memorial at Happy Valley cemetery.



“ We are all lucky Hong Kong is not the pestilential place that it used to be. ”

Dr Ria Sinha

The link between malaria and mosquitoes was not made until 1898, and this had a Hong Kong connection. Patrick Manson, who in 1887 founded the Hong Kong College of Medicine for Chinese which later become one of HKU's three founding faculties, had returned to London where he mentored Ronald Ross, discoverer of the life cycle of the malaria parasite through mosquitoes.

That discovery became crucial to controlling the problem. Hong Kong set up a Malaria Bureau to target mosquitoes and stagnant waters. Its work was interrupted by the Second World War – when bombings created craters that filled with pooled water – but afterwards planes with insecticides and teams of workers with spray cans strapped to their backs, spread out through the territory to control the mosquito population.

By the 1970s, malaria was no longer endemic in Hong Kong – and not a moment too soon. The malaria parasite had begun to develop resistance to quinine, which for years was the

main treatment, and mosquitoes were developing resistance to pesticides.

Globally, the battle continues

"The exhibition outlines all the good reasons why malaria is unlikely to become prevalent here again: monitoring, treatment, contact tracing – the epidemiology is so advanced. People are diagnosed and treated quickly so the disease can't spread. Hong Kong health officials are on top of it," Dr Sinha said.

But it remains a serious problem elsewhere, despite strenuous efforts to eradicate it. About 3.2 billion people are at risk of infection and each year about half a million people die of the disease, many of them children. The complexity of the malaria parasite is one of the stumbling blocks to winning the battle as it changes form multiple times in its lifecycle, both in humans and mosquitoes.

Modern-day treatment for the disease has a connection to this region. Artemisinin is now

the World Health Organization's frontline treatment for malaria. It was discovered and developed in China from a traditional Chinese medicine herb, and will also feature in the exhibition.

Dr Sinha said: "I am trying with this exhibition to connect children to the history of what Hong Kong used to be like, and to make people aware of how big a disease malaria is in the rest of the world. We are all lucky Hong Kong is not the pestilential place that it used to be."

The exhibition offers a chance to revisit those times and leave them at the door.

Fever: The History of Malaria in Hong Kong runs at the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences from April 25 to July 26. ■



The Chinese herb *Artemisia annua* used to produce frontline antimalarial drug Artemisinin.



Exhibits illustrating the work of a Malariaologist.



AMAZING AMAZON

An expedition to the Amazon rainforest led by the School of Biological Sciences research students was a new venture in experiential learning and knowledge exchange and a valuable lesson in conservation and the importance of leaving no trace.

The School of Biological Sciences, partnering with Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) Yan Oi Tong took 30 secondary school and HKU students on a 15-day field trip to the Amazon rainforest in Ecuador last summer. Biological Sciences Principal Lecturer Dr Billy Hau Chi-hang, who led the tour, said the training and tour gave students an opportunity to explore their interests in environmental protection.

They were to visit a remote community in the Amazon rainforest, as well as the Cuyabeno and Yasuni wildlife parks, both protected under National Parks Ordinance (NPO). But preparing the students for the experience started long before the adventure began.

“Before the trip we practised the methodology,” said Dr Hau. “We visited Mai

Po Marshes, Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve where they get used to identifying the flora and fauna. While the species would be different in the rainforest, the methodology is the same wherever you are. I also asked them to study the species that they would be likely to see in Ecuador, so that they would recognise them and know their habits and habitats instantly when the time came.”

The trip was not only a lesson in recognising wildlife though – its main message was the importance of conserving and protecting the environment. The students learned about ‘Leave No Trace’ policy.

“In Ecuador we stayed in a remote village, a petroleum town, in the rainforest,” said Dr Hau. “Even getting there was a unique experience. We arrived at Quito airport, took a

two-hour bus ride to the Amazon River, followed by a five-hour journey by motor canoe up river to the field station. It was a very different world to what the students are used to.”

“What shocked me most was there was no internet access at all when you are in the rainforest... one of the owners of the lodge pulled a practical joke on the Wi-Fi-obsessed students by hanging up a poster saying ‘Free Wi-Fi’ and the password is ‘welcome to the jungle’,” said student Mr Wilbert Li.

Zero discharge policy

“In the rainforest we looked at impact of extraction and of eco-tourism on biodiversity,” said Dr Hau. “We stayed in wooden lodges with no electricity. Water was pumped from



“ In Ecuador we stayed in a remote village, a petroleum town, in the rainforest. Even getting there was a unique experience. It was a very different world to what the students are used to. ”

Dr Billy Hau Chi-hang

the river on one side, waste-water pumped out on the other side of the river after a wetland waste water treatment system. The NPO has a zero discharge policy on waste, and impact is kept to a minimum.

“Everything is boated in, and out. Even the sheets from our beds were transported out by canoe for laundering. They do not want to launder on-site as it would impact the environment. We were surprised by this attention to what seemed like a relatively low-impact thing. But the NPO is seriously trying to minimise the impact on the environment and even the small steps count.”

The group also met researchers in the field and were able to learn from them. They spoke to Professor Kelly Swing of the University of San Francisco in Quito, who runs a research centre

in the Amazon, Dr Ryan Lynch who manages a nature reserve in Ecuador, and Luis Suarez from Conservation International, an international NGO in Quito, whose programmes concentrate on conservation in local communities. The students later wrote up case studies on the challenges they face and the successes they are having.

The Yan Oi Tong, which organised the trip, has a long history of collaboration with HKU, a relationship which was started back in 2007 by the Earth Science Department’s Professor Chan Lung-sang. He organised the first field trips with the NGO with the aim of passing on knowledge to secondary school students. Each year the groups that go comprise a mix of HKU research postgraduate and PhD students and teenagers from secondary schools around Hong Kong.

“The idea is we provide training to secondary school students,” said Dr Hau. “Five of our Department’s MPhils and PhDs train the students and I train the trainers. Then they supervise the students throughout the trip. It’s knowledge exchange – passing on the baton of learning.

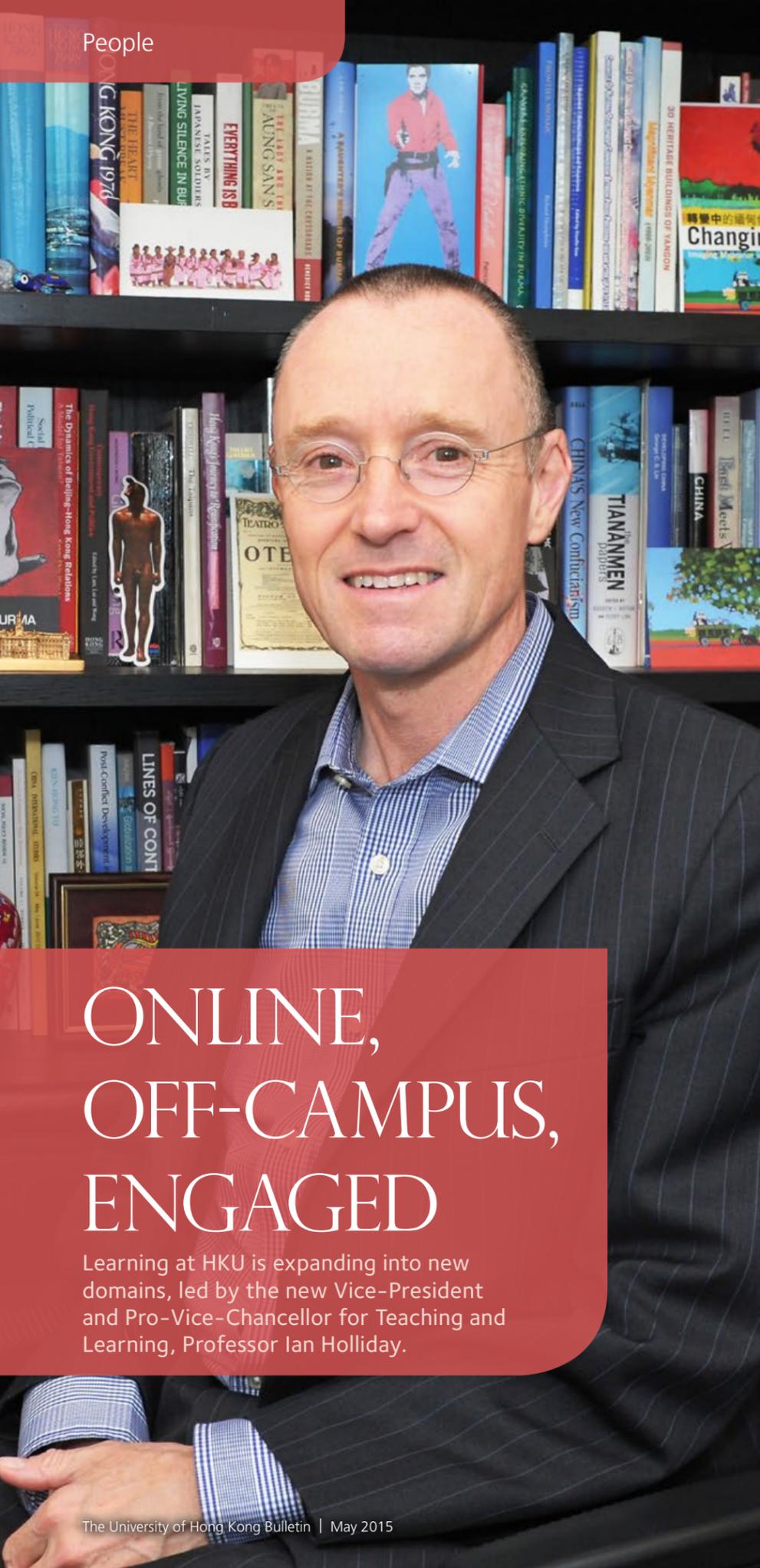
“The first three years the initial field trips were geology focussed and went to the North Pole, the South Poles, and Mount Everest. In the fourth year they went to Kenya, then this year to the Amazon,” said Dr Hau. “They are an invaluable part of HKU’s commitment to knowledge exchange.” ■



A 15-day field trip to the Amazon rainforest for 30 participating secondary school and HKU students. During the trip, they paid a visit to the Cuyabeno Wildlife Reserve, one of the protected areas in the Amazon region.



Students meeting researchers in the field to broaden their horizons.



ONLINE, OFF-CAMPUS, ENGAGED

Learning at HKU is expanding into new domains, led by the new Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Professor Ian Holliday.

As the first in his family to attend university – a family that had hardly any books at home – Professor Ian Holliday is well experienced in ploughing new ground. He will need that pioneering spirit in his new role as the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning at HKU.

The University has not yet completed the first cycle of its new four-year undergraduate curriculum, which will happen when the first cohort graduates next year. But already Professor Holliday is being tasked with pushing the curriculum envelope in new directions.

Technology and globalisation are impacting higher education in ways that were barely imaginable 10 years ago, when the current curriculum reform began. Professor Holliday's job will be to pin down these fast-moving targets to benefit students.

“For me, there are three big items on the agenda. The first one is e-learning, which involves MOOCs [massive open online courses], Wi-Fi enabled classrooms and just about anything that makes the lives of our students as technology-enabled as possible. We can't afford to fall behind our students so we have to meet them where they are, and often that is on the internet.

“Second is our commitment to open up quality opportunities for 50 per cent of all undergraduates to have one Mainland China learning experience and one international learning experience by 2019, and 100 per cent by 2022. That is not so far away and we have included it in our academic development proposal that we recently submitted to the Government.

“And third is that I will be doing what I can to animate the campus culture for teaching and learning. We already have a great platform to

“ We can't afford to fall behind our students so we have to meet them where they are, and often that is on the internet. ”

Professor Ian Holliday

build on with the new campus and the residential colleges and halls. I'm keen to find out what students want to do and let them run with that. Their entire experience at HKU can be an opportunity for teaching and learning.”

Drawing on experience

To accomplish all this, he will be building on the achievements of his predecessor Professor Amy Tsui, who was widely praised for developing the four-year curriculum and introducing innovations such as the Common Core. Supporting him will be a team that includes the new Associate Vice-President for Teaching and Learning, Professor Ricky Wong (see box), the Centre of Development and Resources for Students, the Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre, the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Academic Advising Office, and the Associate Deans for teaching and learning in each Faculty.

Professor Holliday will also draw on his own experience as Dean of Social Sciences from

2006 to 2011, when he introduced a new requirement for undergraduates to pursue off-campus learning related to social innovation and global citizenship goals. He supported these goals by founding the Migrant Outreach Education Initiative (MOEI) programme in which students teach English in Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand.

As Dean, he also kept his door open to students – something that now requires a little more effort given the corporate layout of HKU's senior management offices. He is therefore meeting students on their turf by staying involved with MOEI, continuing to co-teach a Common Core course on humanitarian intervention and seeking opportunities to meet with students on campus. He also chairs the management committee of the four residential colleges. “It's a question of having good dialogue channels with students and being open to them. I will be out and about as much as possible,” he said. ■



Professor Holliday (fourth from right in the second row) with students in the Migrant Outreach Education Initiative programme teaching English in Mae Sot, Northern Thailand.



A whole new learning world

Learning in the 21st century is unlike anything we have seen before, with technology demolishing walls and barriers and offering new ways to connect teachers and learners. The changes have been rapid and are still underway. To ensure HKU stays ahead of the game, a new Associate Vice-President for Teaching and Learning has been appointed to deal specifically with e-learning.

Professor Ricky Kwok of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering has a background in computer science, steered curriculum reform within his department, and has been conducting research on learning analytics.

He will now be consolidating and advancing e-learning across the University as a whole – encompassing everything from MOOCs to SPOCs (small private online courses) to flipped classrooms (where students do homework before class using online and other sources) to blended learning (combining online and face-to-face learning). He will also investigate how to improve the supporting infrastructure on campus, such as Moodle and Panopto, and promote e-learning among his colleagues at HKU and other institutions.

“I believe learning is e-learning. Students come to us with a new way to learn and teachers need to respond with a new way to teach,” he said.

THE NEW BRAND MAN AT HKU™

To be a competitive university today, it is not enough to be excellent in all that you do – you also need brand recognition. Mr Douglas So, the newest member of the University's senior management team, will be developing HKU's brand name locally and globally.



Publicly-funded universities can be rather modest about promoting themselves. So when HKU's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Peter Mathieson, announced in December, 2014 that Mr Douglas So, the new Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement, would be steering a branding and public relations campaign, he felt an explanation was due.

"I do not consider it undignified for HKU to undertake such activities, I consider it essential," Professor Mathieson said. "We have to move on, to accelerate, to run to keep up with our competitors. We must guard against complacency: just because we are a hundred years old and have a very distinguished track record, this is not enough to ensure our future success."

Mr So could not agree more. "We cannot simply say that what we do is good for Hong Kong and we are the best. Now in everything, we have to look not just inward but also outward. Universities in the United States and United Kingdom are doing very well in institutional advancement and developmental matters. There is so much we can learn from them."

Mr So understands intrinsically the benefits to be had by not resting on one's laurels. More than once in his career, he has followed exceptional success with a sharp change in direction because, he said, "I want to learn something new."

Seeking new challenges

He graduated from HKU with a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) in 1990 and Postgraduate Certificate in Laws (PCLL) in 1991, and worked first with the international law firm, Baker and Mackenzie, where in 2000 he arranged the Initial Public Offering (IPO) for PetroChina. After that success, he was keen to do something new so he accepted an offer from the Hong Kong Jockey Club to be its in-house counsel.

This led to him being appointed Executive Director of the Jockey Club's charities portfolio in 2010, which was a major departure from legal work. "I had to leave my comfort zone, learn many new things from scratch and get to know important players in different sectors. It turned out to be a great opportunity because it meant I could work with government, charities and community

“ Branding is a collective effort to demonstrate that HKU is a great tertiary institution that has been making positive contributions to our community for more than a century. ”

Mr Douglas So

partners, bringing positive changes to Hong Kong," he said.

Under his leadership, the portfolio – one of the largest in the world – expanded from 95 projects and HK\$1.3 billion in donations per year to 168 projects and HK\$3.6 billion. But as with the PetroChina deal, success created an itch in Mr So.

"I had been at the Jockey Club for more than 14 years. I had to decide whether to extend my contract – and if I stayed I probably wouldn't make major changes – or embark on a new path and take on new challenges. I also was considering whether to continue to be involved in such a broad portfolio [the Jockey Club funds a huge variety of projects] or to concentrate on one to two areas and go deeper."

He decided to take the plunge and leave the Jockey Club. Initially, he fulfilled a long-held dream and set up Hong Kong's first photographic museum, F11 (www.f11.com), which opened in a heritage building in Happy Valley in September, 2014. Then he received a call that took him in yet another direction.

Giving back to his alma mater

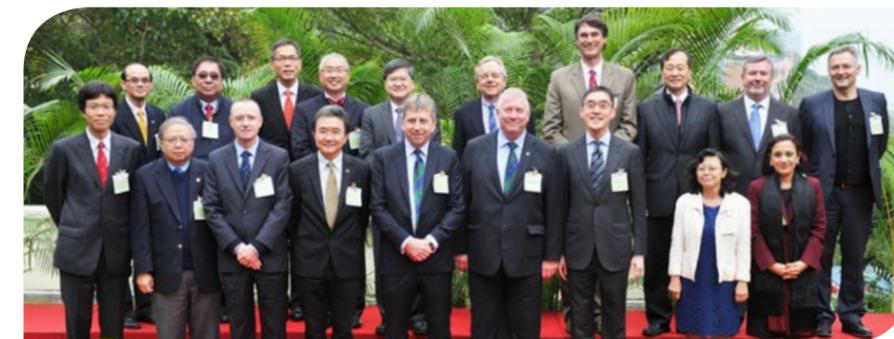
HKU wanted him to lead institutional advancement with a remit that incorporated not only fund-raising and alumni outreach but also brand-building.

"It was a very attractive option for me because, first, HKU is my alma mater. Second, these opportunities do not come by easily and I was deeply honoured that they approached me as a non-academic for a Pro-Vice-Chancellor position. And third, I think this is an important area for HKU's future development," he said.

Mr So will be building relations within and outside HKU to bring a sharper focus to the University's strengths and contributions, and promote HKU and its brand. He is particularly interested in identifying meaningful and touching stories about the HKU family and sharing them in different contexts to help imprint them in the community.

He is now at work building a branding team that will consult Faculties to identify their achievements and the best ways to communicate them. Alumni will also be asked to share their success stories and participate in the branding campaign. Mr So believes everyone in the HKU family can contribute in a meaningful way.

"Branding is a collective effort to demonstrate that HKU is a great tertiary institution that has been making positive contributions to our community for more than a century. We need the support of everyone, including our 10 Faculties, staff, students, alumni, donors and community partners. Hopefully, we as a team can share this vision and continue to support HKU in our own ways," he said. ■



On his first week as Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Institutional Advancement, Mr Douglas So (third from right in the first row) joined the senior management team and Deans of 10 Faculties at the Spring Reception for the media.



Ms Hayley Chan (left) with her coach Mr Rene Appel after winning at the Asian Games.

THE CREST OF A WAVE

She competed in the 2012 Olympics in London, won gold at the 2014 Asian Games and now HKU Arts student and champion windsurfer Ms Hayley Chan has her sights set the 2016 Olympics in Brazil.

Hayley enrolled at HKU in 2010 to do a Bachelor of Arts degree. At the same time she was training to compete in the windsurfing for her first Asian Games in Guangzhou, where she would notch up a very respectable silver medal. Since then she's gone on to take 12th place at the London Olympics in 2012 and a gold medal at last year's Asian Games in South Korea in the women's RS:X event.

It is perhaps ironic that windsurfing career really started to take off the year she enrolled at HKU. Juggling the long hours of training needed to be a top athlete with the amount of studying needed to be a top student proved a very difficult challenge. "I'm not taking any courses right now," said Hayley. "I did one semester in 2010, but since then I've been fully committed to windsurfing. I would have loved to do a little bit of studying at the same time, but with the amount of overseas training and racing needed to be at the top level, I cannot see how I can fulfil both."

Last year she spent just three months in Hong Kong, and at the time of this interview she was doing a training camp in Rio de Janeiro alongside two other leading female windsurfers. "We have been training together



Hayley finished third place in the RS:X Rio de Janeiro Cup this February.

“The most important thing I have learnt is you need to set priorities, then make the decisions and believe in them.”

Ms Hayley Chan

since last year," said Hayley. "2012 London Olympic Gold medallist windsurfer Ms Marina Alabau from Spain, World Cup Silver medallist windsurfer Ms Lilian de Geus from the Netherlands and me, along with their own personal coaches, and an expert coach Mr Bruce Kendall, who is also an Olympic Gold medallist.

"It is important to be in Rio to see what the wind and waters of the 2016 Olympic venue will be. We were in Miami last month, so it was easy to travel to fly on to Brazil for a training camp after that."

As far as Hayley is concerned the high-point of her sporting career so far, was in 2012 Olympics. "That is by far the most incredible experience I have had. The possibility that I might get the chance to be in the Olympics was what drove me to suspend my studies after 2010. I had never thought it would be possible – when I won the trials I could not believe it."

She explained that while the actual racing event was just the same as any other regatta, "the difference was on land. All teams had a lot more support than normal, everybody was

more serious, striving to do the correct preparation and routines every day. Everything around the competition was much more grand and exciting!

"It was amazing standing in the centre of the stadium during the opening ceremony alongside so many athletes from so many other nations. It was overwhelming inside the Olympic Village as well, seeing the extremes of different body builds across athletes from all kinds of sports. You could always guess the giants were the basketball or volleyball players, while the petite pretty figures must be the gymnasts or synchronised swimmers."

Serious setback

Her career has not all been plain-sailing. Prior to those Olympics, she had a serious accident when she collided with a 49er Olympic sailing class boat while training in Dorset. The collision could have been fatal, as it was it left her in the Intensive Care Unit with five broken ribs and she had to have her spleen removed. But in the spirit of what doesn't kill you make you stronger, Hayley said: "I felt if I could survive having one third of my blood inside my abdomen cavity then I ought to be able to do

everything for my life's dream. Having been at death's door for the first time, I didn't want any regrets when the next time came."

She made a fast recovery and went on to finish 12th at her first Olympics. Asked where she'd like to finish at the next Olympics, she is modest: "I hope first to qualify for the 2016 Rio Olympics... and then we'll see."

Asked what advice she would give other students who want to combine academic study with sporting prowess, she said: "There are many choices and decisions to make when you want to be at the top of your game. Even though I am not studying now, I still believe it will be possible to combine both in the future, with more flexibility and planning ahead from all sides. The most important thing I have learnt is you need to set priorities, then make the decisions and believe in them.

"I am doing a Bachelor of Arts degree but I haven't chosen my major yet. It would probably be English Studies since I love language and literature. I hope to be back in university after the 2016 Rio Olympics, so I should finish it by 2020. I'll be 29 by then, pretty old for an undergraduate!" ■



Hayley (right) and her training group in the Miami World Cup.



Hayley (right) and her sports psychologist Ms Angela Hau, who is also an HKU alumna.



The Burlingame mission marks the establishment of friendly relations between China and America. (Courtesy of Harvard College Library)

THE SHARED HISTORY OF CHINA AND AMERICA

The history of relations between China and the United States is usually depicted in polarising terms – one side acts, the other reacts, and in the middle is a balance of power. That does not give a complete picture, argues Professor Xu Guoqi.

China and America could hardly seem more unlike. On the one side is an authoritarian one-party state of rising economic power haunted by its recent past, on the other a noisy democratic superpower struggling to hold ground in a changing world.

But historian Xu Guoqi argues these poles are not so wide apart. In fact, the two countries also have a shared history that has played out over the past 150 years.

Professor Xu is at the forefront in focussing on ‘international’ history, where countries meet and influence each other, and he tells his story in a new book, *Chinese and Americans: A Shared History*.

“Both Americans and Chinese have displayed a remarkable naiveté and ignorance in dealing with each other,” he said. “Looking at their shared history can illuminate a past of cooperation and shared excitement and frustration.”

He hones in on six critical cases that show the depth and nature of Sino-American relations, starting in the 19th century when both countries were embroiled in protracted civil

wars, wary of Europe and finding their feet in the international arena.

Crossing the Pacific

From that background emerged Anson Burlingame, the top United States diplomat in China from 1861 to 1867 who quit to head China’s first diplomatic mission to the West in 1868. He also initiated the Burlingame Treaty, which established friendly relations between the two countries. “This was very significant because he suggested Chinese and Americans

should have the freedom to go to each other’s countries to study and work,” Professor Xu said.

That paved the way for his second case, of 120 boys who were sponsored by the Chinese Government to study in the United States from 1872 to 1881. Many went on to hold senior positions in China, including the first Prime Minister of the Republic of China (ROC), Tang Shaoyi, and they maintained an openness to Western ideas. Some were involved in recruiting American constitutional expert Frank Goodnow of Columbia University to China in



Chinese students’ baseball team in Hartford, 1878. (Courtesy of Thomas La Fargue Papers, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries)



“ Sino-American relations are one of the most important bilateral relationships in the global community. If we emphasise a China-centred or Western perspective, the picture will be distorted. If we bring both together with shared history as the focus, I think we will get a more balanced and reasonable story. ”

Professor Xu Guoqi

1912, to help draft the ROC’s constitution and educate his hosts about American law.

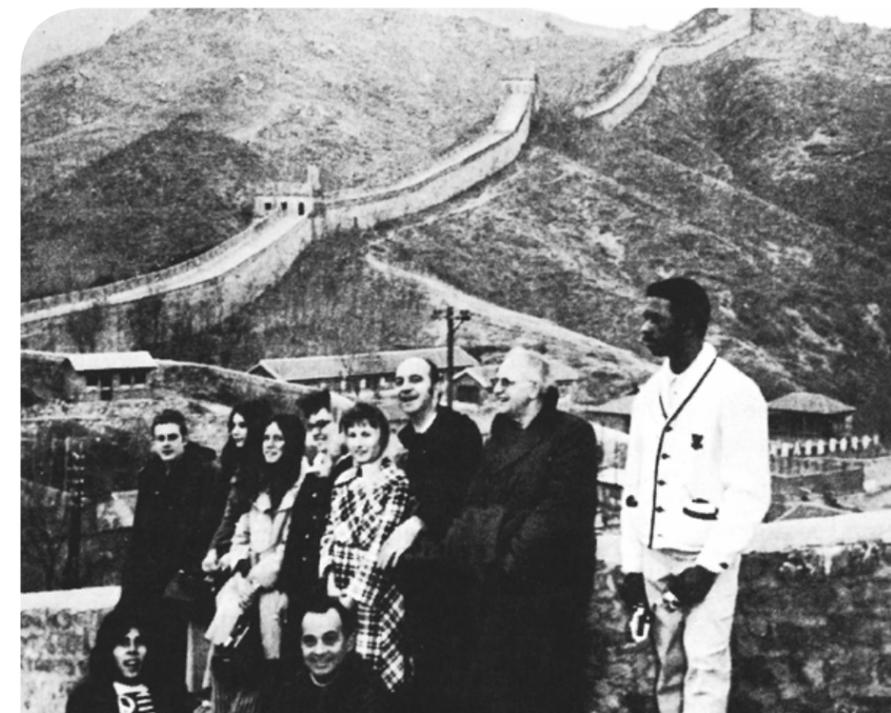
The sharing of ideas also worked both ways. In 1879, Ge Kunhua was hired by Harvard University to be the first Chinese language teacher in the United States. He also sought to educate his students about Chinese culture. Although he died in 1882, he laid the groundwork for Chinese Studies in the United States and the Harvard Yenching Library.

The fifth case involved the American philosopher and educational reformer John Dewey, who arrived in 1919 just before the May Fourth Movement. He gave more than 200 lectures in the country, which were translated into Chinese and distributed widely, including by bookseller Mao Zedong.

The final case does not involve an individual but popular culture as represented by sport, through which important milestones were played out. ‘Ping-pong’ diplomacy broke the ice between China and the United States in the 1970s. China also sent its first Olympic team (consisting of one male sprinter) in 1932 to the Los Angeles Games, and in 1984 the People’s Republic of China sent its first Olympic team to Games that were again held in Los Angeles. Both times the teams met a warm reception from their American hosts.

Disappointments, too

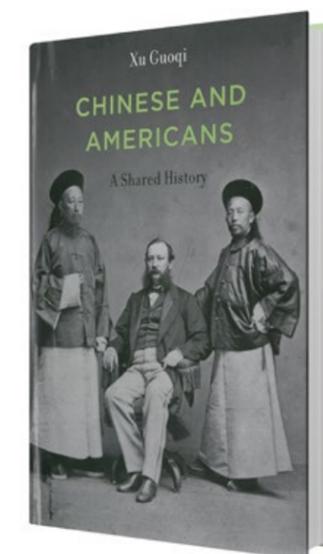
Professor Xu, who lived in the United States for 20 years, acknowledges there have also been shared frustrations and disappointments – the achievements of the Burlingame mission were limited by conservatism and the strength of Western imperialism, the Chinese education mission by the Chinese Exclusion Act and resistance by Qing officials to students learning Western values, Ge Kunhua’s impact by poor timing since few Americans were interested in China at the time, Goodnow and Dewey by



American table tennis delegation on the Great Wall, Beijing. (Courtesy of Friendship flowers are everywhere: Official photos of the Chinese table tennis delegation’s participation in the 31st world table tennis championships)

the fact the two countries were starting to pull apart. Meanwhile, sport has become another arena for competition.

But that does not override the importance of their shared history which, unlike the Cold War, does not involve a zero-sum game. “Sino-American relations are one of the most important bilateral relationships in the global community. If we emphasise a China-centred or Western perspective, the picture will be distorted. If we bring both together with shared history as the focus, I think we will get a more balanced and reasonable story. Otherwise you can only say China is bound to collapse or become an aggressor. Neither view is correct,” he said. ■



Chinese and Americans: A Shared History is published by Harvard University Press.



HKU students join Ms Anne Hayes (second from left) and Mr Glenn Davidson (first from right) of Artstation in creating the site-specific paper installation Meeting Point at the entrance of Chi Wah Learning Commons.

ART FOR ART'S SAKE

The University Artists Scheme has expanded into new areas, widening the variety of arts and artists brought into the students' sphere of experience. It is now one of the Arts Faculty's flagship outreach initiatives.

Launched in 2008, the Arts Faculty's University Artists Scheme (UAS) has brought students into contact with invited artists and given them opportunities to learn the creative process in 'hands-on' ways they might not otherwise experience.

Said Professor John Carroll, Associate Dean for Outreach since November 2012: "The purpose of UAS is to enrich the creative and cultural life of the University community by appointing

visual and performing artists of the highest calibre; engaging students and the University community at large in interaction and dialogue on culture and the arts; and fostering greater appreciation of and lifelong involvement in the arts by integrating artists into students' intellectual and social development."

The first groups in 2008–2010 and 2011–2013 comprised artists in the fields of music, film and drama, and that has now been expanded

to include visual artists and poets. This year's artists are filmmaker Mr Fruit Chan, film producer Mr John Sham Kin-fun, cellist Mr Trey Lee, visual artists Ms Anne Hayes and Mr Glenn Davidson of Artstation and poet Mr Henri Cole.

The idea for UAS was hatched in 2005–2006 when the Departments of Music and Comparative Literature were already inviting musicians or filmmakers to the University to



From left: Mr Fruit Chan, Mr Trey Lee, Mr John Sham Kin-fun, Mr Henri Cole, Mr Glenn Davidson and Ms Anne Hayes.

“ Unlike the gallery or curated space, the University is an alternative which is deeply viable for artists. Because of this access to people who think and pay attention to things, it's such a pleasure to have some really meaningful exchanges... ”

Mr Glenn Davidson

perform or interact with students. For example, in 2005 Comparative Literature hosted the film premiere of Mr Stanley Kwan's *Everlasting Regret* and the Department Chairperson, the late Dr Esther Cheung, invited the director to be an artist-in-residence.

Representatives from the Departments of Comparative Literature, Fine Arts and Music then put together a proposal to expand such initiatives. With funding provided by the Wah Ching Fund, the UAS was born, enabling the Faculty to take the development of humanities to a new level.

Masters of their craft

As then Vice-Chancellor Professor Lap-Chee Tsui commented at the time, not only does UAS give students "opportunities to question true masters of their craft, to have their own work critiqued by these masters and to observe how they put their amazing skills into practice... [but] the Scheme is also an excellent platform for engaging with the wider Hong Kong community. One of our institutional aims

is to promote knowledge exchange and to encourage creative and critical thought in everyone."

Artists are chosen by a committee comprising the Associate Dean for Outreach and representatives from the Departments of Comparative Literature, Music and Fine Arts, as well as, more recently, the School of English. The main criteria are that the artists be of excellent standard and that their portfolio complements Arts' existing syllabus. While few students become artists, many of them will work with artists in various capacities. The UAS gives them the opportunity to understand creative processes.

Funding is vital to the continued excellence of the UAS: Dr Alice Lam is providing the funding for the current UAS term (2014–2016); Dr Tam Wah-ching supported the original 2008–2010 scheme and the 2011–2013 scheme was funded by Mr Daniel Chan.

Usually, participating artists will be involved in six activities – including class visits, public

talks, performances, master classes and workshops – during their two-year appointment. Thousands of people, including members of the University and the wider community, have benefited from these activities – most of which are free – over the nine years that the Scheme has been running.

So far in the current UAS, cellist Mr Trey Lee has given two master classes to students in the Advanced Music Performance class and involved HKU students in his three *Musicus* concerts, which also featured renowned international musicians. In addition to Trey's performance, the concert programme included the world premiere of a work by HKU PhD candidate Mr Gordon Fung Dic-lun. HKU students were also involved in putting together the programme notes for the three performances through their participation in the *Musicus Inspires!* education initiative launched by the Musicus Society in partnership with UNICEF Hong Kong.

Mr John Sham has conducted three class visits, including two to Common Core courses. He



Award-winning cellist Mr Trey Lee (right) holds two master classes with students from the Department of Music's Advanced Music Performance course.



Renowned film producer Mr John Sham (right) conducts three class visits for sharing with students his past experience and perspective on Hong Kong film industry.



Apart from discussing his recent film *The Midnight After* in a talk, Mr Fruit Chan (left) leads a scriptwriting workshop for HKU students.



American poet Mr Henri Cole at the Master Poet event held in November, 2014.

also participated in a public talk with filmmaker Mr Derek Yee in November, 2014. Mr Fruit Chan gave a public talk in February and is currently conducting a scriptwriting workshop for HKU students. Mr Henri Cole has conducted a public poetry reading and a talk on campus, as well as a class visit. He has also met with local writers to discuss the creative process.

Artstation's Ms Anne Hayes and Mr Glenn Davidson were in residence at the University from January 30 to February 14 this year, and involved students in creating *Meeting Point*, a paper sculpture designed for and assembled in the Learning Commons entrance lobby. Five students from Dr Koon Yee-wan's class followed the project from day one. They created panels explaining the project and took photos of the various

stages involved in its production that were exhibited in Chi Wah Learning Commons next to the *Meeting Point* installation.

Novel perspectives

Ms Saehim Park, a second-year Fine Arts student commented: "As a future art historian, talking to Anne and Glenn inspired me with novel perspectives. I got to see how the theories and methods I learned in class applied to the reality of artistic creation. It was an unusual opportunity, not only to be engaged with the making process of an artwork, but also to share the story, impression and understanding with the artists. I love abstract and non-figurative art, especially how it bears the infinite potential for imagination. I am grateful for the freedom it gives, the visual frisson and the *Meeting Point*."

Artstation are planning two more visits in 2016 and students will be involved in the proposed projects. Asked what UAS gives to artists themselves, Mr Davidson said: "Unlike the gallery or curated space, the University is an alternative which is deeply viable for artists. Because of this access to people who think and pay attention to things, it's such a pleasure to have some really meaningful exchanges where you feel you are learning and you can see the benefit to others learning from what you do. And they see things that we don't see in the work. Out in the world of art, it is very tough and competitive and edgy. Here in the University it's not like that. It's more protected and special, it's an enormous relief." ■



Students have the opportunity to work closely with the two artists in creating the installation made up of recycled paper.



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