

Knowledge Enterprise

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Goh Yew Lin
recognised for outstanding service

A clear winner for funding awards

Professor Lim Chwee Teck from the NUS Departments of Bioengineering and Mechanical Engineering as well as Mechanobiology Institute received a spate of good news in recent months. One of his projects was awarded the coveted Human Frontier Science Programme (HFSP) collaborative research grant; and Clearbridge BioMedics, the start-up company he co-founded, won the Asian Entrepreneurship Award and the Innovation & Enterprise Promising NUS Start-up Award.

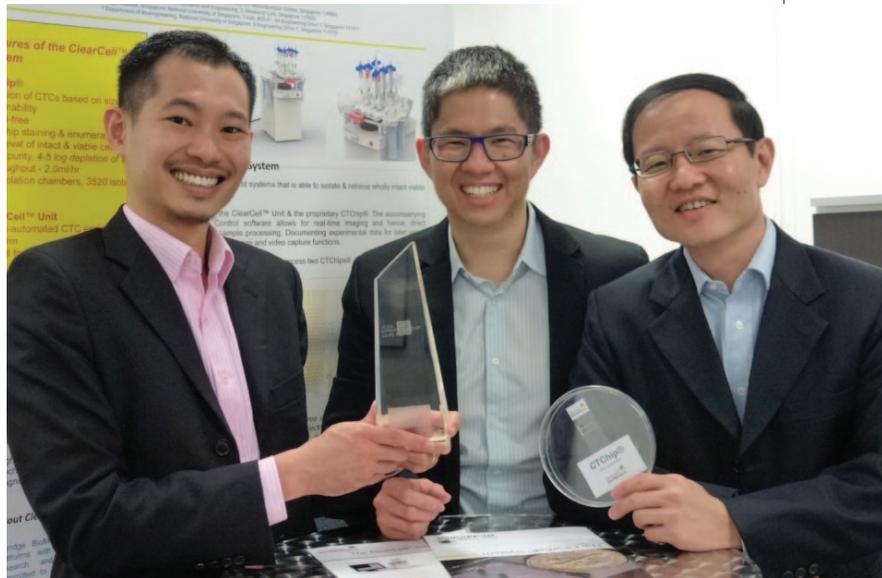
The HFSP programme grants are highly competitive. Each year, out of over 700 proposals submitted from all over the world, only 20 to 30 are awarded. This year, 25 research teams with laboratories in 20 countries clinched the funding. Each team member receives on average US\$110,000 to US\$125,000 (S\$140,480 to S\$159,655) per year for three years. Prof Lim is the only award recipient from Singapore.

His fellow team members are Principal Investigator Professor Benoit Ladoux from NUS' Mechanobiology Institute and University Paris Diderot; Professor René-Marc Mège from University Pierre et Marie Curie, France; and Professor W James Nelson from Stanford University, US. Their project is on "Probing mechano-transduction by cell-cell junctions at the nano- and micro-scales".

Cutting-edge research involving intercontinental collaboration is preferred for the HSFP grant by the International Human Frontier Science Programme Organisation based in France. Said Prof Lim: "I see international teamwork as integral to our multidisciplinary research project. Each team member comes to the table with their own set of skills and expertise and contributing towards achieving the goals of the research. In this day and age, such collaboration often leads to significant and impactful outcomes that would otherwise be impossible if we just work in a cocoon, closely guarding our own research interest."

Prof Lim's Clearbridge BioMedics, an NUS spin-off company, also garnered strong funding support this year. Among 18 technology start-up companies nominated to present their business plans at the Asian Entrepreneurship Awards held in May, Clearbridge BioMedics beat the competition with their novel ClearCell™ System. They won the top prize of 3 million yen (S\$48,290) and three years of free tenancy at the Tokatsu Techno Plaza in Chiba prefecture, Japan.

Clearbridge BioMedics was also one of the winners of the Promising NUS Start-up Award at the 2012 Innovation & Enterprise Awards, organised by NUS Enterprise and the NUS Society. It received S\$100,000 in prize money and a trophy. The company's flagship invention is its ClearCell™ System which comprises patent-pending microfluidic biochips that are able to effectively detect and isolate wholly intact circulating tumour cells from patients' blood samples.



Part of Clearbridge BioMedics' management team: (from left) Dr Andrew Wu (holding the Asian Entrepreneurship Award trophy), Mr Johnson Chen and Prof Lim Chwee Teck

Well-known for this groundbreaking invention and his work on the mechanobiology of living cells, Prof Lim has won many awards, including the 2011 President's Technology Award and 2010 IES Prestigious Engineering Achievement Award. He also co-founded three start-up companies that exploit inventions developed in his lab. ■

MARK OF EXCELLENCE

- Two NUS architecture students, Loh Kin Kit and Phoaw Yen Shen, under the tutelage of Assistant Professor Chang Jiat Hwee, won the 2012 Berkeley Prize Essay Competition. The first Singapore team to win the annual competition since 1999, they were awarded a cash prize of US\$4,000 (S\$5,150) for their essay, which topped the 174 entries from 31 countries. Entitled "The

greatest public good is public space", their essay featured Singapore's Marina Barrage, a dam-cum-lifestyle hub, as a rare and valuable public space for people from all sectors of society to gather and interact. Organised by the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, the Berkeley Prize seeks to promote architectural design as a social art.