



Media Release

Three Renowned Clinician Scientists receive *STaR* awards to do Translational and Clinical Research in Singapore

Three renowned clinician scientists received the prestigious Singapore Translational Research (STaR) Investigator Awards to conduct research in Singapore. The award, jointly offered by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), provides research and salary funding to the researchers over a period of five years.

The STaR award is an initiative under the Biomedical Sciences Initiatives Phase II. Its objective is to recruit top-notch clinician scientists to carry out medical research, henceforth bringing about better clinical applications and patient outcomes.

The STaR Investigators will help to foster strong collaborations with research groups and institutions within Singapore and globally. More importantly, they will also serve as mentors for the younger researchers.

The three STaR awardees this year include a health sciences research expert who is also the Director and Professor of the Health Sciences Research Programme in Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore, and two international cancer researchers from the prestigious Van Andel Research Institute (VARI) and the Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre, both from the United States of America.

Said Mr Lim Chuan Poh, A*STAR Chairman and Co-Chair for Singapore's Biomedical Sciences Executive Committee, *"The recipients of this year's STaR Investigator Award have excellent track records of sustained and outstanding achievements in their respective fields of research. At the same time, they have also demonstrated their potential to transform Singapore's translational and clinical research landscape through their facilitation of strategic collaborations for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. I am confident this new cadre of STaR Investigators will significantly add to our pool of scientific talent to create new knowledge and remain globally competitive in various fields."*

Said Ms Yong Ying-I, Permanent Secretary (Health) and Co-Chair for Biomedical Medical Sciences Executive Committee, *"The STaR Investigator Award serves as a very important mechanism to attract both local and overseas outstanding TCR investigators to pursue cutting-edge research in Singapore. Their top-rate scientific programmes will contribute and facilitate the development of clinical research and eventually help enhance our care for our patients"*.

Added Mr Lim, "The impact of this growing cadre of clinician scientists is already being felt in Singapore. For example, the Gastric Cancer Consortium that brings together a number of clinician scientists has detected 10 cases of gastric cancer at a very early stage and eradicated this lethal disease through the screening of 1629 individuals at high risk for developing it. Such outcomes of clinician scientists' collaborations with basic scientists are an affirmation that we can realise the full potential value of our investment in biomedical sciences."

The three clinician scientists add to the inaugural batch of four STaR awardees in 2008, who have since begun their research in Singapore.

The STaR Investigator Award is funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) and administered by the National Medical Research Council of the MOH.

About STaR Investigator Award:

The **STaR Investigator Award** is a prestigious award, jointly offered by the Singapore Ministry of Health's National Medical Research Council (NMRC) and the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), to recognise and support investigators with outstanding qualifications in translational and clinical research.

Tenable in Singapore, **STaR Investigators** can start a new research programme which can potentially advance Singapore's priorities in biomedical research and healthcare or contribute to the Translational and Clinical Research (TCR) Flagship Programmes. STaR Investigators may also spend up to 20% of their time engaging in direct patient care in Singapore.

In keeping with the international status of the **STaR Investigator Awards**, recipients will also receive very competitive research support and remuneration.

Recipients of the Singapore Translational Research Investigator Award (STaR)

Name	Institution	Area of research
Professor H. Phillip <u>KOEFFLER</u>	National University Health System	Translational Cancer Research
Professor David Bruce <u>MATCHAR</u>	Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore	Health Services Research
Professor <u>TEH</u> Bin Tean	National Cancer Centre Singapore	Translational Cancer Research

Ministry of Health and A*STAR

3 November 2009

FACTSHEET

Singapore Translational Research Investigator Award (STaR)

Professor H. Phillip KOEFFLER

Professor, Department of Medicine, National University of Singapore (NUS)
Deputy Director (Research), National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS)
Senior Consultant, Department of Haematology-Oncology, NCIS
Senior Principal Investigator, Cancer Science Institute of Singapore, NUS

Area of Work: Research and Education – Cancer for the 21st Century

Before coming to Singapore, Professor H. Phillip Koeffler was the Director of the Division of Hematology/Oncology at Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre and holder of the Mark Goodson Chair in Oncology Research at Cedars-Sinai. In addition, he was a hematologist/oncologist with the Cedars-Sinai Thyroid Cancer Center and a Professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology/Oncology at the David Geffen School of Medicine at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He advanced from Assistant to Full Professor of Medicine at UCLA in only eight years.

Professor Koeffler aims to foster the development of cancer research and education for young investigators in Singapore. He will also mentor post-doctorates and students by encouraging the formation of multidisciplinary tumor boards, cancer-related focus groups as well as a lecture series on a weekly basis by various laboratories in order to discuss basic science and translational science related to cancer. He will also look into providing laboratory framework to allow post-doctorates and students to learn the latest technologies to analyse some very basic cancer-related issues.

Professor Koeffler's research endeavors to identify unique genomic abnormalities of selected Asians cancers, and to explore the biologic and clinical significance of PAX5 deletions, mutations and fusion products in acute leukemia. He will continue to interact with various pharmaceutical companies, as well as academic institutions around the world to test new and or old drugs for new purposes and for their potential anti-cancer activity by taking advantage of a large array of cancer cell lines and xenograft models, as well as appropriate knock-in and knock-out mice.

Professor Koeffler has published more than 650 peer-reviewed papers, in journals such as *Nature*, *Science*, *Journal of Molecular and Cellular Biology*, *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, *Blood*, *Cancer Research*, *Journal of Cell Biochemistry*, *Oncogene*, *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, *Leukemia*, *Leukemia Research*, *British Journal of Haematology*, *European Journal of Biochemistry*, *Journal of Clinical Oncology* and *AIDS*. Professor Koeffler has also published more than 70 book chapters on his research and has received numerous federal and state research grants.

Professor Koeffler is a member of editorial boards for numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *Cancer Research*, *the International Journal of Oncology*, *Journal of Molecular Medicine*, *Cytokines and Molecular Biology*, *Leukemia*, *Cancer Molecular Biology*, *Leukemia Research* and Hematologic Pathology.

Professor David Bruce MATCHAR

Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore

Area of Work: Optimizing health services and systems to promote humane, effective, sustainable health care

Professor David Matchar is currently the Inaugural Director and Professor of the Programme in Health Services and Systems Research, which is one of the five Signature Research Programmes of the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School. Prior to embarking his career in Singapore in August 2008, Professor Matchar was a Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine (General Internal Medicine) at Duke University Medical Centre. He is a practicing internist and has extensive experience in health services research, as director of the Center for Clinical Health Policy Research, and the Evidence-based Practice Center at Duke University Medical Centre.

Professor Matchar's research relates to clinical practice improvement - from the development of clinical policies to their implementation in real world clinical settings. His major content focus has been on cerebrovascular disease and other disabling neurological conditions. His work also covers a broad range of clinical issues including cardiovascular disease, mental health, and oncology. His work bridges biomedical research and technical analysis, including simulation modeling, to inform public policy and clinical practice in Singapore, and in doing so provide models for health care systems in other countries.

Another part of Professor Matchar's role will be to oversee the Lien Centre for Palliative Care – a collaborative entity that is formed between Duke-NUS, Lien Foundation, National Cancer Centre Singapore and the SingHealth Group, to promote better practices in the care for the dying.

Professor Matchar has an illustrious career in the medical sciences that spans three decades. He joined Duke University Medical Center as an Instructor in 1983; and in the years following, moved quickly through the ranks. He was appointed Director of the Duke Centre for Clinical Health Policy Research in 1988. Professor Matchar was made a Full Professor in 1999, in the Department of Medicine at Duke University Medical Centre.

Professor Matchar also serves as consultant in the general area of analytic strategies for clinical policy development, as well as for specific projects related to stroke, cognitive impairment, depression, atrial fibrillation, and chronic kidney disease. He has worked with AHCPR (now AHRQ), the US Institute of Medicine, American College of Physicians, American Heart Association, American Academy of Neurology, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the WHO, and several pharmaceutical companies and device manufacturers.

Professor TEH Bin Tean
National Cancer Centre Singapore

Area of Work: Translational Cancer Research

Professor Teh obtained his MBBS. from the University of Queensland, Australia, in 1992, and his Ph.D. from the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, in 1997. He became an Associate Professor of medical genetics at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden in 1999. He later joined the Van Andel Research Institute (VARI), USA as a Senior Scientific Investigator in January 2000. In 2005, Professor Teh was promoted to Distinguished Scientific Investigator, the highest academic ranking at the VARI. Administratively, he served as the Deputy Director for Research Operations at the Institute from 2003 to 2006. In 2007, he established a joint translational research laboratory at the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) with VARI. He serves as the Director of VARI International from 2008.

Professor Teh is one of the world's leading kidney cancer research scientists and a pioneer in molecular profiling of kidney cancer. To date, his group has identified the molecular signatures of over a dozen of kidney cancer subtypes, which have led to identification of novel diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic biomarkers and targets. His works have helped elucidate the mechanisms and resistance in the therapeutics of kidney cancer such as sunitinib and other kinase inhibitors.

Moving forward, Professor Teh will be helping to establish a hereditary cancer clinic and a molecular diagnostics laboratory at NCCS. With the identification of the genes responsible for all major hereditary cancer syndromes and the increasing awareness of local physicians and patients concerning the hereditary nature of cancers, there is a strong need for such a clinic in the region. Genetic testing, coupled with proper genetic counseling, will provide both psychological and physical benefits to patients and their family members.

In research Professor Teh will focus on cancer drug resistance studies, assist in other ongoing translational research programs such as the one on pancreaticobiliary cancer, mentor clinician scientists, bench scientists and medical students (through appointment with Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School), and help establish key regional and international collaborations in translational cancer research that will enhance the status of Singapore as the regional hub for translational cancer research.

Professor Teh currently serves as an adjunct professor at the Baylor College of Medicine, Karolinska Institute and Nanjing University. He has published over 220 peer-reviewed articles in journals such as *Nature*, *Nature Genetics*, *Cancer Cell*, *Cancer Research*, and *American Journal of Surgical Pathology*. He is a member of editorial boards for numerous peer-reviewed journals, including *Lancet Oncology*, *Cancer Research*, *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, and *International Journal of Oncology*.