PRESS RELEASE

First Malaysia Zebrafish Disease Model Workshop 2015 convenes local and foreign experts in the field

KUALA LUMPUR, [12 NOVEMBER 2015] – Nearly 70 scientists from New Zealand, USA, India and Malaysia came together to participate in the First Malaysia Zebrafish Disease Model Workshop 2015 organised by Cancer Research Malaysia (formerly known as Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation – CARIF), University of Malaya and Monash University, held from 11-12 November 2015 in Subang Jaya.

Still relatively new among the scientific community here in Malaysia, the 1st Malaysian Zebrafish Disease Model Workshop saw participants coming together to learn the latest developments in using zebrafish as a model to study human diseases, to present data and share their research techniques, details on zebrafish husbandry besides having the opportunity to interact with international and local experts in this field in hopes to jumpstart the research using zebrafish here in Malaysia.

Known by its scientific name Danio rerio, the Zebrafish is a small tropical freshwater fish native to the Himalayan region and is a popular pet in Malaysia. It was first established as a vertebrate model for basic biological research in the 1980s by George Streisinger and his colleagues at the University of Oregon, USA,

Since then, zebrafish is gaining prominence as an important vertebrate model for investigating various human diseases such as neurodegenerative disease, cancer and chronic inflammatory diseases. Consequently, these zebrafish models now afford excellent opportunities for identifying novel therapies.

As an animal model, it provides unique advantages through the optical clarity of its embryos, high fecundity rate, large number of eggs, ease of genetic manipulation and low cost of maintenance. Interestingly, many organs such as the kidney and heart can regenerate in zebrafish.

“The genetic information of zebrafish is very similar to that of humans,” said Professor Dr. Teo Soo Hwang, Chief Executive, Cancer Research Malaysia. “There is 70% similarity between zebrafish and human genomes and 84% of human disease genes have a zebrafish counterpart. Hence, discoveries made using the zebrafish model can often directly translate to clinical applications, making zebrafish a very powerful screening tool in investigating various human diseases ,“ said Professor Dr. Teo during the launch of the workshop.

One of the highlights of the meeting was when the best oral presentation award which was won by Ms. Vithya Velaithan who presented a paper titled Novel Inhibitors of Notch Signalling Identified from Zebrafish Phenotypic Assay. The competition was open to all conference participants which included outstanding young scientist and post-doctoral trainees who have submitted an abstract on their research using zebrafish and was judge by the international panel of experts that were present.

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About Cancer Research Malaysia

Cancer Research Malaysia (formerly known as Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation) is the first independent cancer research organisation in Malaysia. Cancer Research Malaysia conducts research to identify better ways to prevent, detect and cure cancer for Malaysians. Cancer Research Malaysia is committed to ensuring that at least 90% of funds received are spent on research. Cancer Research Malaysia researchers work closely with experts worldwide to fight cancers that occur in Asia as well as globally.

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