

**P**ERDANA University Graduate School of Medicine (PUGSOM) in collaboration with Johns Hopkins School of Medicine (USA) is proud that Assistant Professor, Dr Abhimanyu Veerakumarasivam, is one of two inaugural recipients of the Merdeka Award Grant.

Dr Veerakumarasivam, a University of Cambridge-trained geneticist and joint faculty member at Universiti Putra Malaysia, is one of Malaysia's leading investigators in the biology of bladder cancer.

The prestigious Merdeka Award Grant is designed to identify and recognise outstanding young Malaysians who demonstrate a commitment to excellence and to provide the awardee an opportunity to expand his network and enhance research collaborations.

Dr Veerakumarasivam is currently the Director of Scientific Foundations of Medicine at PUGSOM.

PUGSOM is the first graduate entry medical school in Malaysia and is the first full-scale academic health centre collaboration between the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine (JHUSOM) and an international partner.

The partnership of PUGSOM with Johns Hopkins brings the novel Genes to Society medical curriculum and an emphasis on world-class research along with a wealth of intellectual and technological resources to Malaysia's scholastic environment.

PUGSOM's research strategy begins with the understanding that translation of biomedical discoveries from bench to bedside requires significant cross-disciplinary collaboration.

# Merdeka Award for geneticist



Dr Veerakumarasivam (centre) is one of Malaysia's leading investigators for the biology of bladder cancer.

PUGSOM intends to target major global health challenges that are of particular relevance to Malaysia, including emerging infections such as dengue, non-communicable diseases such as type-2 diabetes and cancer as well as occupational health.

To achieve rapid advancements in the translation of scientific discoveries at all levels, PUGSOM has developed three critical pillars that will serve to support the various initiatives, Centre for Translational Research, Centre for Applied Computational Biology and Epidemiology Research Unit.

PUGSOM aims to align laboratory and computational scientists with

field investigators and practitioners to ensure that technological innovation advancement is placed in the context of real world clinical and public health resources.

The Centre for Applied Computational Biology at PUGSOM serves as an important anchor for the interdisciplinary collaborative research teams. The centre has, and continues to recruit, energetic researchers.

They work tirelessly to sift through high-tensity molecular data from high-throughput wet-lab experiments by using in silico approaches to identify specific profiles that are associated with specific disease states.

The centre also organises introductory workshops in bio-informatics that has proven to popular among many budding local researchers who plan to develop capacity in this emerging field.

The centre will also be coordinating the delivery of an innovative post-graduate diploma in bioinformatics. In tandem, PUGSOM will also offer comprehensive doctoral and masters-level training in translational medical research.

To ensure that the research fostered and conducted at Perdana University is aligned to international standards in human-subjects research, an internationally recognised institutional review board has been developed to approve, monitor and review all research projects.

The PUGSOM research faculty has a blend of local and Johns Hopkins talent that include well-established and internationally recognised individuals as well as young, bright researchers that show great promise.

Every PUGSOM faculty member is sent to Johns Hopkins for faculty development and to promote the bridging collaboration. The research ecosystem that PUGSOM strives to create facilitates greater collaboration with the various local universities and institutions.

Through the Johns Hopkins Swami Institute for International Medical Education, PUGSOM and Johns Hopkins University School

of Medicine awards competitive research grants to promote research projects between Johns Hopkins and Malaysia.

The students of the MD programme at PUGSOM are required to get involved in research through the Scholarly Concentration Programme that is embedded within the MD curriculum.

While most of the students will align themselves with researchers at PUGSOM or collaborating local institutions, about one-fifth of the first two batches of students have had an opportunity to conduct their research project at leading laboratories at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore.

During this programme, students are provided the infrastructure and mentoring necessary to produce a scholarly project in an area of individual interest and promote a passion for discovery, openness to new ideas and the acquisition of attitudes and skills for self-directed, lifelong learning and scholarship.

In collaboration with the excellent research and academic institutions in Malaysia and abroad, the inaugural Merdeka Award Grant, received by Dr Veerakumarasivam, reinforces this spirit of collaboration and innovation typified by the PUGSOM and Johns Hopkins collaboration.

■ For details, look out for the advertisement in this *StarSpecial*.