

Conferment of Doctor of Science *honoris causa* upon Prof Mak Joon Wah

Mak Joon Wah was born in Penang in 1942, and is the fourth child of six boys of Mak Kok Kee, a businessman, and Pak Mooi Chee, a housewife. Joon Wah received his secondary education from Methodist Boys School in Penang, and obtained his medical degree from the National University of Singapore in 1967. After graduation, he served in various hospitals under the Ministry of Health, Malaysia for five years before joining the Institute for Medical Research (IMR) in 1972. During his stay with the IMR, Dr Mak headed the Malaria and Filariasis Division, and the Biotechnology Division before his appointment as Director in 1995. After his retirement from IMR, he joined the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences in Universiti Putra Malaysia in 1997 where he served for three years as Professor of Tropical Medicine.

Prof Mak joined International Medical University (IMU) as Professor of Medical Parasitology in 2001, and served as Dean of the School of Postgraduate Studies from 2006 to 2013. He was appointed as the Vice President (Research) on 1 September 2011, and as Director of the Institute for Research, Development and Innovation (IRDI) IMU in September 2012. Prof Mak is also a Fellow of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia, and a Fellow of the Academy of Medicine Malaysia.

Throughout his research career, Prof Mak's main interests are in tropical medicine, bioactive molecules, and infectious diseases. He is a globally recognised expert in filariasis and malaria, and has been appointed as a WHO consultant in 17 countries. He has published over 345 scientific papers in refereed journals. He was the Foundation Editor of the journal, "Tropical Biomedicine", which is the first biomedical ISI journal in Malaysia (published by the Malaysian Society of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology). Recognising the urgent need for a good resource for medically important parasites, he produced an "Atlas of Medically Important Parasites" together with his wife, Dr Choong Mooi Fai. This book is now used as a text in universities for the training of medical and health science undergraduates and postgraduates, and is currently in the third edition, with more than 5000 copies being sold worldwide. In addition, Prof Mak has successfully supervised 13 PhD and 11 MSc students.

For his contributions to science, Prof Mak was the joint recipient of the first National Science Award (Anugerah Sains Negara) in 1985, and awarded the Sandosham Gold Medal in 1989. In 2011, Prof Mak was the winner of the prestigious Merdeka Award for "Outstanding Scholastic Achievement", in recognition of his contributions to fundamental and applied research in parasitology and parasitic diseases, public health and pathology. Prof Mak was instrumental in influencing the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) to include the private universities in the country in the allocation of research funds. This is a milestone achievement for the progress of scientific research in Malaysia.

Under the dedicated stewardship of Prof Mak, IMU has made significant progress in research, as evidenced by the significant increase in publications in peer reviewed journals, success in getting external grants for research, and increased number of postgraduate students. Prof Mak is instrumental in setting the directions of research in IMU, which focus on four thrust areas, namely Environmental and Population Health, Cancer and Stem Cell Research, Bioactive Molecules and Drug Delivery, and Health Professional Education Research. Under the ASPIRE strategic plans, Prof Mak set the stage with the establishment of the Institute for Research, Development and Innovation (IRDI) on 18 September 2012.

Prof Mak and his wife have three children – two boys, Yew Meng and Yew Nam, and a girl, Yuet Mei and five grandchildren. He has many hobbies which include jungle trekking, hiking, gardening and reading, especially poems and classics.

