



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RM4mil Collaborative Award from Wellcome Trust UK for Cancer Research Malaysia

The non-profit to collaborate with researchers in UK and Singapore to develop breast cancer risk assessment tool for Asian women.

SUBANG JAYA, 20 February 2017: Cancer Research Malaysia (CRM) opens 2017 with another significant milestone by becoming the first organisation in the country to win a Collaborative Award from Wellcome Trust UK, the world's largest medical research charity funding research into human and animal health.

Collaborative Awards promote the development of new ideas and speed the pace of discovery. Through the Award, the Wellcome Trust funds teams of researchers, consisting of independent research groups, to work together on the most important scientific problems that can only be solved through collaborative efforts.

The Collaborative Award amounting to £770,000 (RM4.2mil) awarded by the Wellcome Trust UK will see the team from Cancer Research Malaysia working with researchers in Cambridge University, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Universiti Malaya, and National University Hospital Singapore in a 36-month study entitled '*Determination of the prevalence breast cancer predisposition genes in South East Asian women and development of an Asian polygenic risk assessment tool*'.

By combining cohorts from Malaysia and Singapore, the collaborators will work to complete the most comprehensive analysis to determine genes that are associated with risk of breast cancer in Malay, Chinese and Indian women. In total, 5,000 breast cancer patients and 5,000 healthy women will be analysed for 30 genes and a genome wide scan, making this the largest study of its kind in South East Asia. This could lead to the development of breast cancer risk assessment tool for Asian women which will enable patients and doctors to make shared decisions regarding the management of one's risk of breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women worldwide, with nearly 1.7 million new cases diagnosed in 2012 (second most common cancer overall). This represents about 12% of all new cancer cases and 25% of all cancers in women¹. According to the National Cancer Registry Report, 32% of Malaysia's women are diagnosed with breast cancer, with a 17% incidence rate from 2007-2011.

Professor Dr. Teo Soo-Hwang, Chief Executive of CRM, and one of the lead investigators for the study, remarks, "In Malaysia, 1 in 20 women will develop breast cancer at some point of their lives. Around 5,000 Malaysian women are diagnosed with breast

¹ <http://www.wcrf.org/int/cancer-facts-figures/data-specific-cancers/breast-cancer-statistics>

cancer every year, most of them aged between 30 and 60 years, where nearly half of those affected are under 50-years of age. This is how common the disease is in Malaysia and how randomly it strikes.

At the moment, there is just too little information and even some dangerous misuse of genetic testing by companies seeking to make quick profits rather than helping patients. With this study, we aim to build a risk assessment tool so that Asian women can more accurately determine their risk of breast cancer. This will allow for equitable access to genetics screening for the public and help women make informed choices in managing their risk of breast cancer.”

“Breast cancer is a curable disease if it is treated early and we are proud to be part of this research initiative which helps women to identify their risks in developing breast cancer,” said **UNMC’s Vice Provost (Research & Knowledge Exchange) Professor Claire O’Malley**. “As a leading research-intensive university we have been at the forefront of addressing challenges faced by global and local communities through our research. We hope that our participation in this research on breast cancer will help to save lives and enrich the quality of life for millions of women in South East Asia and beyond,” O’Malley added.

Other investigators for the study are Ms Yoon Sook Yee, Head of the Familial Cancer Programme and Associate Genetics Counsellor at Cancer Research Malaysia; Professor Dr. Nur Aishah Mohd Taib, Consultant Breast Surgeon at Universiti Malaya; Dato Dr. Yip Cheng Har, Lead Clinician for Breast Cancer Research at Cancer Research Malaysia and consultant breast surgeon at Sime Darby Medical Centre; Dr. Mikael Hartman, Senior Consultant for Breast & Trauma Surgery at National University Hospital Singapore; Dr. Antonis Antoniou, Reader in Cancer Risk Prediction at the University of Cambridge; Professor Dr. Douglas Easton, Director of the Centre for Cancer Genetic Epidemiology within the Department of Public Health and Primary Care at the University of Cambridge; and Dr Ho Weang Kee, University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus.

Prof. Dr. Teo Soo-Hwang summarises: “We are very proud that CRM is made up of capable, forward-thinking and fearless Malaysian scientists who have the audacity to believe that we will reverse cancer. This study would not have been possible without financial support from our donors and the strong partnerships with both international collaborators and local agencies.

-END-

About Wellcome Trust

Wellcome Trust exists to improve health for everyone by helping great ideas to thrive. It is a global charitable foundation, both politically and financially independent. It supports scientists and researchers, take on big problems, fuel imaginations and spark debate. Its funding supports over 14,000 people in more than 70 countries. In the next five years, it aims to spend up to £5 billion helping thousands of curious, passionate people all over the world explore ideas in science, population health, medical innovation, the humanities and social sciences and public engagement.

The Wellcome Trust is a charity registered in England and Wales, no. 210183. Its sole trustee is The Wellcome Trust Limited, a company registered in England and Wales, no.

2711000 (whose registered office is at 215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK. For more information, go to <https://wellcome.ac.uk>

About Cancer Research Malaysia

Cancer Research Malaysia (CRM) is an independent, non-profit cancer research organisation in Malaysia. Dedicated to bringing scientific advancement to cancer patients, CRM leads the fight to reverse cancer and conducts impactful research to identify better ways to prevent, diagnose, detect and cure cancer for Malaysians. CRM is committed to ensuring that at least 90% of funds received are spent on research and works closely with top scientists and clinicians both locally and internationally.

CRM connects with the world through its website www.cancerresearch.my and www.facebook.com/cancerresearchmalaysia.

For further information on this news release or to explore opportunities to volunteer, fundraise, advocate or partnering with CRM as a CSR-of-Choice, please contact:

Rafizah Amran

Head of Communications

Cancer Research Malaysia

T: +603 5639 1965

E: rafizah.amran@cancerresearch.my

John de Silva

Manager, PR & Communications

Cancer Research Malaysia

T: +603 5639 1970

E: john.desilva@cancerresearch.my

About The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus

The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) offers a world-class British education which is ranked among the top 100 universities worldwide.*

Designed to reflect University Park Campus in Nottingham, it is a self-contained, vibrant village situated on an attractive and landscaped 125-acre site. UNMC has around 5,000 students and around 700 teaching and administrative staff from all over the world.

According to The Graduate Market in 2015, High Fliers Research, our alumni are Britain's top choice for employers. We offer the best of UK education in an Asian setting.

* QS World University Rankings 2016/17.

For more information consult www.nottingham.edu.my