

IFOM partners A*STAR for joint cancer research

Singapore, March 2, 2011: The Italian FIRC Institute of Molecular Oncology (IFOM) and the Agency for Science and Technology of Singapore (A*STAR) announced the launch of the IFOM-p53Lab Joint Research Laboratory for cancer research in Singapore.

The activities of the IFOM-p53Lab Joint Research Laboratory will focus on new targeted therapies against cancer. They will leverage the combined knowledge and technological expertise of the two agencies to accelerate the transfer of scientific findings from the laboratory to clinical practice.

IFOM, the Milan-based FIRC Institute for Molecular Oncology, strongly believes that the future of cancer research relies on the establishment of international cooperative agreements to achieve the necessary synergies and benefits resulting from shared technologies, human resources and cross-fertilization of ideas. Established by the Italian Foundation for Cancer Research (FIRC), IFOM is a private Italian institute dedicated to the study of tumor formation and development. After 10 years of scientific activity, IFOM is actively developing a network of partnerships with highly competitive international players in Asia.

"You can't do everything alone", remarked Mr Marco Foiani, IFOM Scientific Director. "From early diagnosis to targeted therapies, it is clear that if you want to put yourself in the best conditions you need to leverage your resources by finding world class research partners that have similar research interests. The traditional narrow land attitude will ultimately lead to failure: in an increasingly competitive world, establishing long term alliances on projects of common scientific interest is key to achieving first class results which matters not only to Italy but to the entire community. In this framework, A*STAR is an ideal scientific partner because it's a growing scientific reality producing high quality scientific results and their approach to international collaborations perfectly matches ours."

Said Mr Lim Chuan Poh, Chairman of A*STAR, "The IFOM-p53Lab Joint Research Laboratory will serve as a key platform for scientific exchange and interactions between IFOM and A*STAR. We are particularly excited by IFOM's capabilities and expertise in the field of molecular oncology, and look forward to both broadening and deepening our scientific interactions with them to accelerate the discovery of new knowledge and translations to bring about benefits to millions of cancer patients worldwide."

The newly opened IFOM-p53Lab Joint Research Laboratory will be led by Dr Cheok Chit Fang, a Singaporean scientist and A*STAR scholarship recipient educated at Imperial College London and at Oxford University. Dr Cheok Chit Fang and her team will work in close collaboration with IFOM laboratories headquartered in Milan and with A*STAR's p53 Laboratory directed by A*STAR Chief Scientist Sir David Lane, the British scientist credited with co-discovery of the p53 gene which is mutated in 50 percent of human cancers.

Said Sir David Lane, "Chit Fang has shown herself to be highly dedicated and skilled in studying DNA damage and repair pathways that critically determine the success or failure of cancer chemotherapy. She is a fine example of the world-class talent that Singapore is nurturing to create scientific solutions for the benefit of society, and I am confident that she will produce even more exciting breakthroughs as head of the IFOM-p53Lab Joint Research Laboratory."

The Joint Research Laboratory is the first major result of a broad Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2009 aimed at establishing synergies between A*STAR, IFOM, the Italian European Institute of Oncology (IEO) and The European School of Molecular Medicine (SEMM).