

MEDIA RELEASE

4 November 2015

TWO A*STAR SCIENTISTS CLINCH PRESTIGIOUS 2015 EMBO YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD

Dr Khor Chiea Chuen and Dr Nicolas Plachta are two of only five award recipients outside of Europe and its neighbouring countries

Singapore—Two A*STAR scientists have joined 21 other scientists as EMBO Young Investigators, becoming part of an international network that represents some of the best young researchers in Europe and beyond. They are: Dr Khor Chiea Chuen, Group Leader at the Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS), and Dr Nicolas Plachta, Senior Principal Investigator at the Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IMCB), who have been recognised as 2015 EMBO Young Investigators.

Dr Khor and Dr Plachta are also amongst only five scientists¹ outside of Europe and its neighbouring countries to be selected for the Young Investigator Programme since its launch in 2000. In fact, of the five Young Investigators, four have come from A*STAR and Singapore,

The EMBO Young Investigator Programme recognises young, promising researchers who are under the age of 40 and who have established their first laboratories in Europe or the EMBO cooperation partner countries in the past four years. Singapore has been an EMBO cooperation partner since 2011² and has recently become the first Associate Member State of the European Molecular

¹ The three other recipients outside of Europe are Dr Bruno Reversade, A*STAR's Institute of Medical Biology, Dr Florent Ginhoux, A*STAR's Singapore Immunology Network, and Dr Yuki Nakamura, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan

² <http://www.embo.org/news/press-releases/press-releases-2011/scientists-in-singapore-and-europe-to-collaborate>

Biology Conference (EMBC)³. The agreement will facilitate stronger scientific interaction and collaborative research between Singapore and Europe. (Please refer to **Annex A** for more information on the EMBO Young Investigator Programme and EMBO.)

About Dr Khor Chiea Chuen

Dr Khor Chiea Chuen is the first Singaporean EMBO Young Investigator recipient. His research focuses on the identification of genetic markers for common human diseases such as exfoliation syndrome and typhoid sepsis. Dr Khor is a strong advocate of bridging discovery research and clinical applications. Through understanding the determinants that predispose healthy human beings to disease, Dr Khor seeks to advance medical science and transform existing clinical practices. He was awarded the 2013 Singapore National Academy of Science Young Scientist Award for Biological and Biomedical Sciences for his research excellence in genetics and heredity.

Dr Khor said, "It is indeed a privilege to be part of this community of distinguished young scientists from across the world. The EMBO Young Investigator Programme offers me greater opportunities to interact and exchange scientific ideas with top international scientists, and such network and collaborative activities are key to furthering the biomedical sciences in Singapore. I look forward to contributing to Singapore and A*STAR's continued R&D success with the insights I will gain from this programme."

About Dr Nicolas Plachta

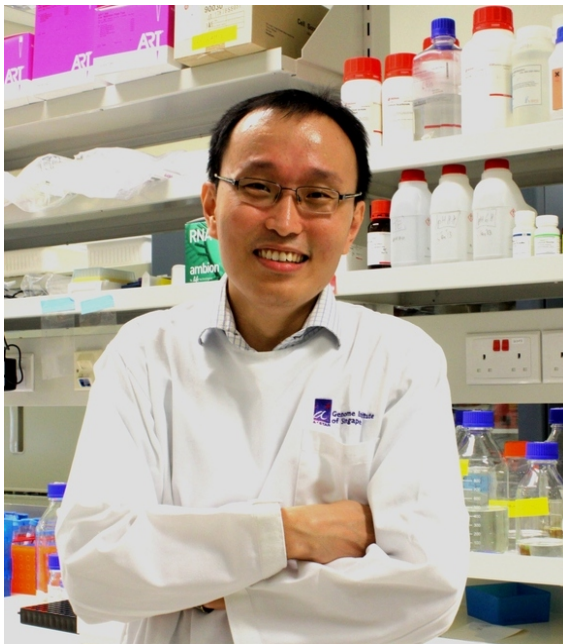
Dr Nicolas Plachta joined IMCB under the A*STAR Investigatorship Programme, a platform that was established to support and promote early independence and career development of future world leaders in scientific research. Dr Plachta's main research interest lies in understanding how mammalian life begins by studying living embryos in real time using cutting-edge cell imaging techniques. Through in-depth examination on the formation and development of mouse embryos, Dr Plachta's research enables the identification of biological pathways and signatures linked to fertility hence pave the way to the development of novel therapeutic solutions to human infertility. Dr Plachta's accomplishments and potential in the area of molecular biology was recognised by several prominent research organisations around the world, including fellowships from the Swiss

³ <http://www.a-star.edu.sg/Media/News/Press-Releases/ID/4196/Singapore-Europe-forge-deeper-ties-in-the-life-sciences-through-milestone-cooperation-agreement.aspx>

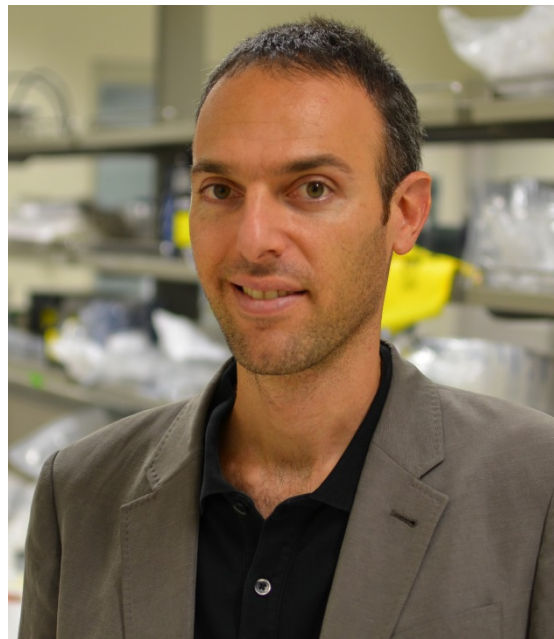
National Science Foundation, EMBO, California Institute of Regenerative Medicine and Viertel Foundation.

On being selected for the EMBO Young Investigator Programme, Dr Plachta said, “I’m humbled by the recognition given and honoured to be receiving this award as a representative of A*STAR and Singapore. The nurturing and integrative research environment here has benefited immensely in furthering my research and giving me the opportunity to collaborate with world-renowned scientists from various disciplines. Working and learning here has been an enriching experience and I look forward to continuing my work with A*STAR.”

Mr Lim Chuan Poh, Chairman of A*STAR, said, “I congratulate Chiea Chuen and Nicolas for winning this prestigious award. Having two world-class EMBO recipients this year is testimony to the success of A*STAR’s talent development strategy of nurturing a strong pool of local talent that is complemented by a rich diversity of outstanding international scientists. I look forward to the continued excellence and contributions of Chiea Chuen and Nicolas to drive the growth of our biomedical sciences R&D in the years to come.”



Left: Dr Khor Chiea Chuen, Group Leader, A*STAR’s Genome Institute of Singapore



Right: Dr Nicolas Plachta, Senior Principal Investigator, A*STAR’s Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology

Enclosed:

Annex A – Factsheet on EMBO Young Investigators 2015, EMBO Young Investigator Programme and EMBO

For media queries and clarifications, please contact:

Tan Yun Yun (Ms)
Senior Officer, Corporate Communications
Agency for Science, Technology and Research
Tel: +65 6826 6273
Email: tan_yun_yun@a-star.edu.sg

About the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) is Singapore's lead public sector agency that spearheads economic oriented research to advance scientific discovery and develop innovative technology. Through open innovation, we collaborate with our partners in both the public and private sectors to benefit society.

As a Science and Technology Organisation, A*STAR bridges the gap between academia and industry. Our research creates economic growth and jobs for Singapore, and enhances lives by contributing to societal benefits such as improving outcomes in healthcare, urban living, and sustainability.

We play a key role in nurturing and developing a diversity of talent and leaders in our Agency and Research Institutes, the wider research community and industry. A*STAR oversees 18 biomedical sciences and physical sciences and engineering research entities primarily located in Biopolis and Fusionopolis.

For more information on A*STAR, please visit www.a-star.edu.sg.

About A*STAR's Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS)

The Genome Institute of Singapore (GIS) is an institute of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR). It has a global vision that seeks to use genomic sciences to achieve extraordinary improvements in human health and public prosperity. Established in 2000 as a centre for genomic discovery, the GIS will pursue the integration of technology, genetics and biology towards academic, economic and societal impact.

The key research areas at the GIS include Human Genetics, Infectious Diseases, Cancer Therapeutics and Stratified Oncology, Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology, Cancer Stem Cell Biology, Computational and Systems Biology, and Translational Research.

The genomics infrastructure at the GIS is utilised to train new scientific talent, to function as a bridge for academic and industrial research, and to explore scientific questions of high impact.

For more information about GIS, please visit www.gis.a-star.edu.sg

About A*STAR's Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IMCB)

The Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology (IMCB) was launched on 23 January 1985, with its official opening ceremony held on 2 October 1987 at the National University of Singapore (NUS). It subsequently became an autonomous research institute (RI) of A*STAR, moving to Biopolis in 2004. IMCB's vision is to be a premier cell and molecular biology institute which addresses the mechanistic basis of human diseases and its mission is to conduct cutting-edge discovery research in disease pathways; to groom early career researchers to be future leaders in research; and to collaborate with medical and industry communities for research impact. IMCB plays an important role training and recruiting scientific talents, and has contributed to the development of other research entities in Singapore. Its success in fostering a biomedical research culture in Singapore has catalysed Singapore's transformation into an international hub for biomedical research, development and innovation.

Funded primarily by the Biomedical Research Council (BMRC) of A*STAR, IMCB's current discovery research includes cell biology in health and disease; animal models of development & disease; cancer & stem cell genetics & genomics; and structural biology & drug discovery. IMCB's translational research includes humanised model organisms for human diseases; systems approach for disease target identification & validation; and protein engineering & antibody development for diagnostics & therapeutics. Research activities in IMCB are supported by cutting edge infrastructure and facilities including quantitative proteomics; humanised mice; mouse models of human cancer; protein crystallography X-ray; zebrafish for drug metabolism & toxicology; advanced molecular histopathology; imaging & electron microscopy; and DNA sequencing.

For more information about IMCB, visit www.imcb.a-star.edu.sg

FACT SHEET ON EMBO YOUNG INVESTIGATORS 2015, EMBO YOUNG INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME AND EMBO

EMBO Young Investigators 2015

Of all the applications received for the EMBO Young Investigator Programme 2015, 23 young researchers from twelve countries were selected. The success rate for selection to the highly competitive programme was thirteen per cent in 2015. Scientists from Singapore can apply to EMBO programmes due to a cooperation agreement between both parties that started in 2011.

For more information on the 2015 awardees, please visit <http://www.embo.org/news/press-releases/press-releases-2015/twenty-three-researchers-recognized-as-embo-young-investigators>

About the EMBO Young Investigator Programme

The EMBO Young Investigator Programme is the first initiative in Europe to address the needs of young independent research group leaders and is unique in its focus on effective networking activities, offering support and promoting exchange between the young scientists. Since its launch in 2000, the EMBO Young Investigator Programme selects independent scientists throughout the EMBC Member States, thereby creating a European network of outstanding life scientists. From the onset, this highly competitive programme has attracted applications from some of the best young group leaders in Europe. 365 scientists have been distinguished as EMBO Young Investigators since the launch of the programme in 2000.

For more information on the programme, please visit <http://www.embo.org/funding-awards/young-investigators>.

About EMBO

EMBO is an organization of almost 1600 leading researchers that promotes excellence in the life sciences. The major goals of the organization are to support talented researchers at all stages of their careers, stimulate the exchange of scientific information, and help build a European research environment where scientists can achieve their best work.

EMBO helps young scientists to advance their research, promote their international reputations and ensure their mobility. Courses, workshops, conferences and scientific journals disseminate the latest research and offer training in techniques to maintain high standards of excellence in research practice. EMBO helps to shape science and research policy by seeking input and feedback from our community and by following closely the trends in science in Europe.

For more information on EMBO, please visit www.embo.org.