Research Prospectus

2026-2027

HKU Med
LKS Faculty of Medicine
School of Biomedical Sciences
香港大學生物醫學學院

What are the conceptual frameworks in Biomedical Sciences research?

- How do cancers take control of our body and develop into a deadly disease?
- Where do stem cells come from and how can we harness their potential for regenerative medicine?
- How can mouse be used as model organism to understand human diseases and explore new therapies?
- How do big data transform biomedical discovery and digital healthcare?
- How does our brain work or fail to work in events such as aging, cognitive disorders and neurodegeneration?
- How can we design, evolve and engineer molecules, circuits and systems for next generation of therapeutics and diagnostics?

Research Areas

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Stem Cell, Molecular and Developmental Genetics

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Structural, Chemical and Synthetic Biology

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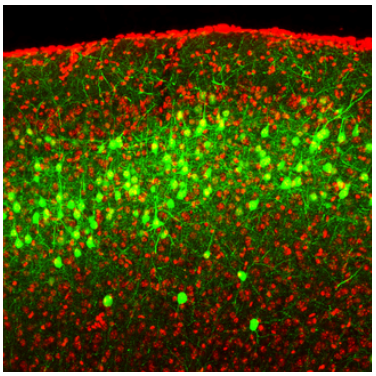
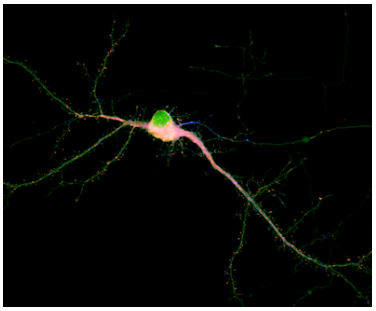
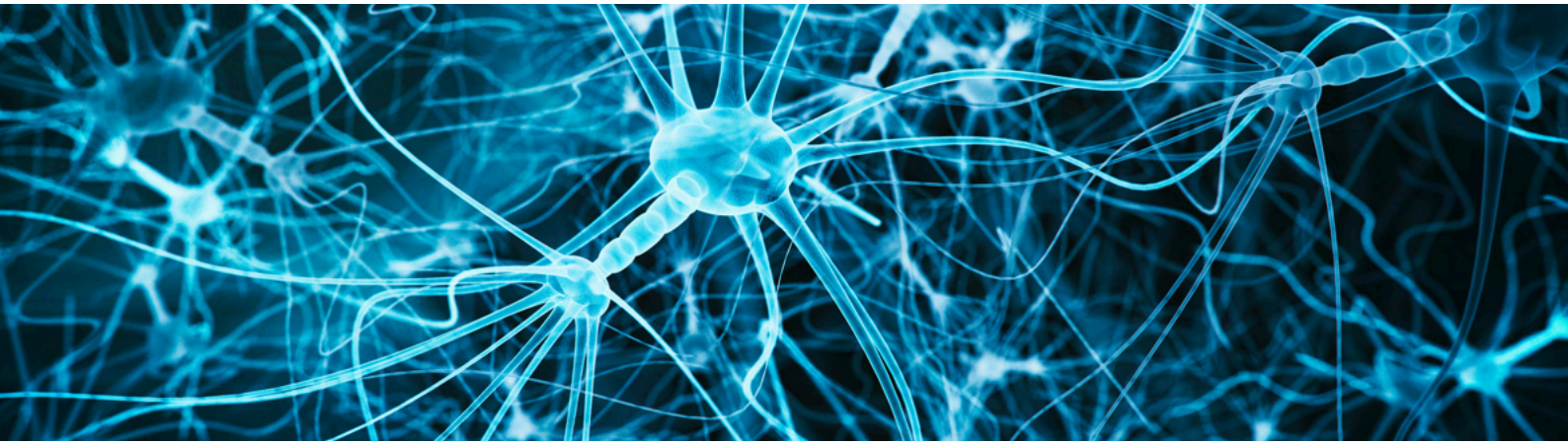




Research Area :
Brain and Cognitive Sciences

Cognitive functions are orchestrated by neurons and glial cells in different regions of the brain, and represent one of the major issues in neurodegenerative diseases and brain disorders. Our pioneering research into the functions of the nervous system and the underlying causes of neurological diseases tackles real-world health problems. Graduate students will join our expert research teams to investigate the molecular events that support cognitive functions, including the formation and retraction of synapses, dendrites and axons. Students will be trained to use zebrafish, Xenopus, rat, and mouse as genetic model organisms to investigate neurodevelopment, neuromuscular junction formation, physiological functions of neurons and glial cells, neuroinflammation, and pathological mechanisms that lead to neurodegeneration and neurocognitive disorders. The other training we offer includes research skills to assess the value of deep brain stimulation, neuroprotective effects from exercise and diet, and the potential utility of stem cells in neuroregeneration.



Brain and Cognitive Sciences: Contact Persons

Professor Martin C.H. Cheung
Research interest: Neural development; Modelling neurological diseases by cellular reprogramming; Molecular mechanisms of melanoma metastasis and drug resistance

Professor Guoping Fan
Research interest: Epigenetic mechanisms in Neural development and degeneration; Stem cell differentiation and epi-genomic analysis; Development of cell and gene therapy including mRNA delivery to treat human diseases

Professor Man Lung Fung
Research interest: Hypoxia physiology

Professor Michael Häusser
Research interest: Cognitive and computational psychology; Neurosciences; Computational neuroscience; Behavioural neuroscience; Cognitive neuroscience

Professor Ruben Hervas Millan
Research interest: Functional protein aggregation; Functional amyloids; Electron-cryo microscopy; Memory persistence; Cellular memory

Professor Jiandong Huang
Research interest: Synthetic biology; Vaccines for infectious diseases and cancers; Biological pattern formation; Intracellular transport

Professor Michael S.Y. Huen
Research interest: DNA repair; Genome stability; DNA damage response; Cell cycle checkpoint control

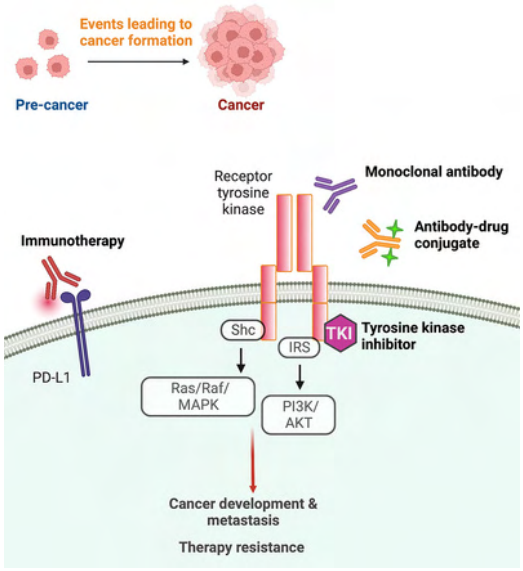
Brain and Cognitive Sciences: Contact Persons

Professor Ralf Jauch
Research interest: Protein design; Stem cell engineering; Rejuvenation and ageing; Modelling diseases with stem cells

Professor Jung Kim
Research interest: Effects of systemic stresses on the blood-brain barrier (BBB) and the brain; Systemic tumour-host interactions; Paraneoplastic syndromes; Systemic stress-induced stem cell dysregulation

Professor Cora S.W. Lai
Research interest: Two-photon in vivo imaging; Learning and memory; Synaptic plasticity; Cognitive neuroscience; Psychiatric diseases

Professor Shoutang Wang
Research interest: Microglia and neurodegenerative diseases; Immunotherapy and translational medicine; Cell signaling



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Research Area :
Cell Signalling and Cancer Biology

Cell signalling defines the means via which cells sense and respond to internal and external cues, and is fundamental to cell proliferation and survival, cell-cell communication, and cell differentiation and organismal development. For instance, when cells detect changes in nutrient levels within the microenvironment, a cascade of signalling events ensues to maintain cell and tissue homeostasis. Our graduate programme in Cell Signalling and Cancer Biology provides comprehensive and highly interdisciplinary training in understanding how cellular signalling alterations can lead to various human diseases including cancer. Our faculty members have expertise in a wide range of areas including mechanisms of diseases, preclinical disease models, genomics and epigenetics, cancer stem cells, DNA damage repair and DNA replication, molecular virology, cancer drug responses, tumour microenvironment, tumour-immune cell interactions, metabolism, cancer drug discovery, medicinal chemistry.

Our research is highly translational. Recent breakthroughs include, for examples, the identification of novel druggable molecular targets in cancers such as that of liver, ovary and skin; discovery of new druggable proteins by chemoproteomics or new covalent drug lead compounds as cancer therapeutics. Students will work in state-of-the-art laboratories to make high-impact discoveries for improving disease treatments and prevention.

Cell Signalling and Cancer Biology: Contact Persons

Professor Martin C.H. Cheung
Research interest: Neural development; Modelling neurological diseases by cellular reprogramming; Molecular mechanisms of melanoma metastasis and drug resistance

Professor Clive Y.S. Chung
Research interest: Chemical biology; Proteomics; Mass spectrometry; Molecular imaging; Medicinal chemistry

Professor Man Lung Fung
Research interest: Hypoxia physiology

Professor Mu He
Research interest: Human airway and lung organoids; Tissue regeneration; Ciliopathies; Evo-devo; Developmental biology; Organoids in droplets

Professor Michael S.Y. Huen
Research interest: DNA repair; Genome stability; DNA damage response; Cell cycle checkpoint control

Professor Dong-Yan Jin
Research interest: Molecular virology; Innate antiviral response; Viral oncogenesis

Professor Jung Kim
Research interest: Effects of systemic stresses on the blood-brain barrier (BBB) and the brain; Systemic tumour-host interactions; Paraneoplastic syndromes; Systemic stress-induced stem cell dysregulation

Professor Sung Chul Kwon
Research interest: RNA biology and transcriptome engineering

Professor Shikang Liang
Research interest: DNA damage response and repair; Assembly and regulation of macromolecular complexes; Structural biology; Cryo-electron microscopy; Structure-based drug discovery

Professor Heidi G.S. Ling
Research interest: Metabolic reprogramming of T cells in chronic inflammatory diseases ; Cancer immunology; Immune adaptation to systemic metabolic diseases

Professor Pengtao Liu
Research interest: Stem cell; Pluripotency and totipotency; Cell fate reprogramming; Hematopoiesis; Cell-based therapies; Stem cell-based antiviral and anti-aging discovery

Professor Yang Liu
Research interest: Epigenetic regulation; Chromatin structures and dynamics; Structural biology; Cancer biology

Professor Stephanie K.Y. Ma
Research interest: Cellular plasticity; Cancer stemness; Tumor microenvironment; Cancer immunology; Drug resistance; Pre-clinical models; 3D organoids; Translational cancer biology; Hepatocellular carcinoma

Cell Signalling and Cancer Biology:
Contact Persons

Dr . Liyang Ma
Research interest: Hematopoiesis; Immune Cell-based therapies; Stem cell

Dr. Gladys Y.P. Poon
Research interest: Cancer genomics; Single-cell transcriptomics; Computational biology; Population genetics; Somatic evolution; Hepatocellular carcinoma

Professor Tiago, Rito
Research interest: Tissue design and maturation; Synthetic embryology; In vitro disease models; Human trunk development; Computer Vision; Microfluidics; Robotics

Professor David J.H. Shih
Research interest: Cancer genomics; Bayesian modelling; Deep learning; Bioinformatics

Professor Rio R. Sugimura
Research interest: Organoids and stem cells; Cell engineering; Immunology; Cancer immunotherapy; Synthetic biology

Professor Shoutang Wang
Research interest: Microglia and neurodegenerative diseases; Immunotherapy and translational medicine; Cell signaling

Professor Alan S.L. Wong
Research interest: Genome editing; Protein engineering; Synthetic biology; Combinatorial genetics; Drug target discovery; Disease biology

Professor Jason W.H. Wong
Research interest: Cancer genomics; Mutational processes; Epigenetics; Bioinformatics; Proteomics

Dr. Yan Xue
Research interest: Single cell omics; Lineage tracing; Spatial transcriptomic; Epigenetics; Cancer evolution; Stem cell biology

Dr. Zi-Wei Ye
Research interest: Molecular virology; Antiviral immunity; Viral oncogenesis; Vaccines and drugs for infectious diseases

Professor Cheng-Han Yu
Research interest: Cell adhesion and cytoskeleton regulation; Podosome and invadopodium; Mechanobiology; Phosphatidylinositol signaling; Fluorescence microscopy

Dr. Qingqing Zhang
Research interest: Biology of ageing; Stem cell-based anti-ageing discovery; Ageing-related diseases treatment; Stem cells therapy

Professor Zhongjun Zhou
Research interest: Chromatin architectural alterations in stem cell aging; Aging vaccine development; Islet organoid generation for diabetes

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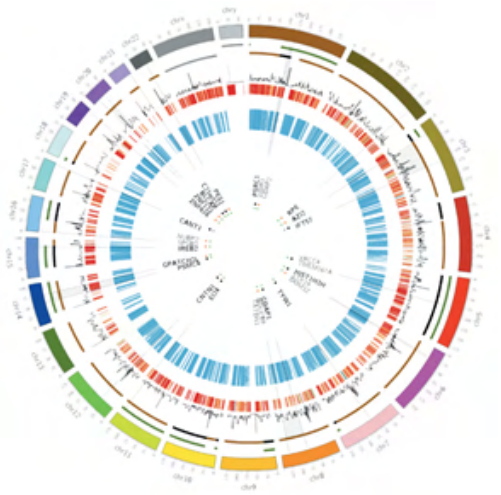

Research Area :
Genomics and Biomedical Data Sciences

Technological advances in genomics, proteomics, metabolomics, imaging, and access to a wide variety of digital health data in electronic health records, enable a big data approach to scientific discovery and digital health innovation. Our School has strong expertise in developing and applying state-of-the-art statistical and computational methods to harness these big data to address a variety of biomedical problems and drive novel discoveries in healthcare research. Key research areas include the following:

- Genomic landscapes and mutational signatures in cancers and rare diseases
- Single cell transcriptomic or spatial transcriptomic data to identify cell populations and heterogeneity
- Bayesian modeling of complex biological data
- Altered gut microbiome in diseases
- Metabolomics and proteomics to identify novel disease biomarkers
- Use of wearable devices, smartphones and artificial intelligence in modern digital healthcare

Graduates of the Genomics and Biomedical Data Sciences programme will be well qualified for careers in data science, software development, artificial intelligence, machine learning and deep learning algorithms, etc.

Genomics and Biomedical Data Sciences:
Contact Persons

Professor Guoping Fan
Research interest: Epigenetic mechanisms in Neural development and degeneration; Stem cell differentiation and epi-genomic analysis; development of cell and gene therapy including mRNA delivery to treat human diseases

Professor Joshua W.K. Ho
Research interest: Bioinformatics; Artificial intelligence; Medical big data; Digital health technology; Metagenomics; Single cell genomics

Professor Yuanhua Huang
Research interest: Bioinformatics; Machine learning; Single-cell genomics; Spatial transcriptomics; Biomedical artificial intelligence

Professor Heidi G.S. Ling
Research interest: Metabolic reprogramming of T cells in chronic inflammatory diseases ; Cancer immunology; Immune adaptation to systemic metabolic diseases

Professor Pengtao Liu
Research interest: Stem cell; Pluripotency and totipotency; Cell fate reprogramming; Hematopoiesis; Cell-based therapies; Stem cell-based antiviral and anti-aging discovery

Professor Stephanie K.Y. Ma
Research interest: Cellular plasticity; Cancer stemness; Tumor microenvironment; Cancer immunology; Drug resistance; Pre-clinical models; 3D organoids; Translational cancer biology; Hepatocellular carcinoma

Dr. Liyang Ma
Research interest: Hematopoiesis; Immune Cell-based therapies; Stem cell

Genomics and Biomedical Data Sciences: Contact Persons

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Research interest: Cancer genomics; Single-cell transcriptomics; Computational biology; Population genetics; Somatic evolution; Hepatocellular carcinoma.

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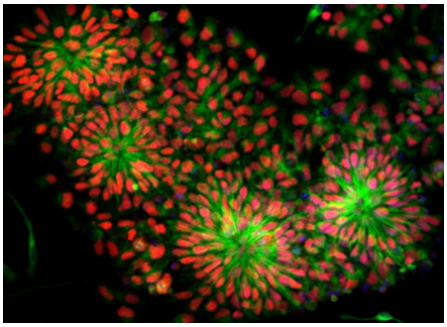

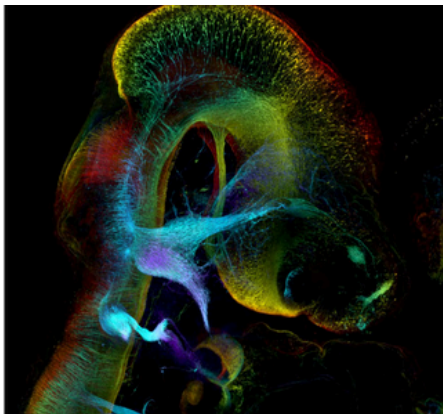

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Research Area :
Stem Cell, Molecular and Developmental Genetics

Our research in developmental biology provides invaluable insights into the molecular events that underlie the diverse cellular changes during embryogenesis, which is tightly linked to stem cell biology. A totipotent stem cell undergoes well-defined cell divisions and progressive lineage differentiation to specific cell types in the body. Gene mutations in stem cells can result in developmental defects and diseases. Thus, our Stem Cell, Molecular and Developmental Genetics programme harnesses stem cell biology, developmental biology and functional genetics to address complex questions in disease mechanism and the control of stem cell differentiation and cell functions, with an ultimate goal to contribute to the development of regenerative medicine, organ transplantation and genomic medicine for the benefit of humankind. Specific areas of focus include musculoskeletal, neurological, metabolic, and ageing defects. Students will develop cutting-edge research skills in cell reprogramming, design of stem cell inducer, directed evolution in mammalian cells, novel stem cell platforms and organoid systems, model organisms (e.g. Planarian, chick embryo, genetically engineered mice) and engineering immunology.

Stem Cell, Molecular and Developmental Genetics: Contact Persons

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Research interest: Neural development; Modelling neurological diseases by cellular reprogramming; Molecular mechanisms of melanoma metastasis and drug resistance

Professor Guoping Fan
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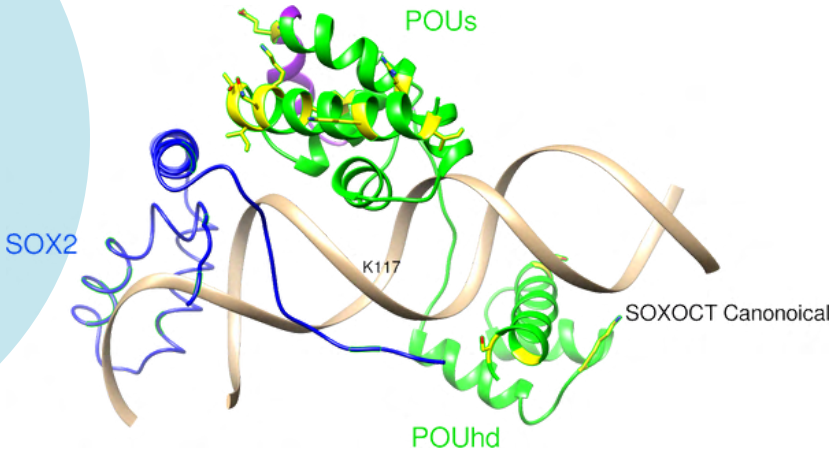

Research Area :
Structural, Chemical and Synthetic Biology

A transdisciplinary understanding of biomolecule function at the atomic level provides insights into the molecular biology underlying all of life and medicine. Our Structural, Chemical and Synthetic Biology programme encompasses studies of structures and dynamics of molecular complexes (structural biology), perturbation of biological systems (chemical biology), and re-engineering biomolecules by rational design and evolution (synthetic biology). Our elite faculty members have deep expertise in these areas - integrating structural biology with functional proteomics, nucleic acid evolution with translational technology, and artificial biological circuits with genome engineering. With cutting-edge technologies, this programme provides students with innovative learning experiences and tools, including CRISPR, CombiSEAL, CombiGEM, machine learning-assisted protein engineering, high-throughput screening, high-throughput sequencing, nucleic acid nanotechnology, X-ray crystallography and cryo-electron microscopy. These approaches uncover new ways to better understand biology and medicine, and allow translational angles across disease therapeutics, diagnostics and bioengineering.

Structural, Chemical and Synthetic Biology: Contact Persons

Professor Clive Y.S. Chung
Research interest: Chemical biology; Proteomics; Mass spectrometry; Molecular imaging; Medicinal chemistry

Professor Guoping Fan
Research interest: Epigenetic mechanisms in Neural development and degeneration; Stem cell differentiation and epi-genomic analysis; Development of cell and gene therapy including mRNA delivery to treat human diseases

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Professor Sung Chul Kwon
Research interest: RNA biology and transcriptome engineering

Professor Shikang Liang
Research interest: DNA damage response and repair; Assembly and regulation of macromolecular complexes; Structural biology; Cryo-electron microscopy; Structure-based drug discovery

Structural, Chemical and Synthetic Biology: Contact Persons

Professor Pengtao Liu
Research interest: Stem cell; Pluripotency and totipotency; Cell fate reprogramming; Hematopoiesis; Cell-based therapies; Stem cell-based antiviral and anti-aging discovery

Professor Yang Liu
Research interest: Epigenetic regulation; Chromatin structures and dynamics; Structural biology; Cancer biology

Professor Tao Ni
Research interest: Structural biology, Cryo-EM and cryo-electron tomography; Virology; Macromolecule assembly

Professor Tiago, Rito
Research interest: Tissue design and maturation; Synthetic embryology; In vitro disease models; Human trunk development; Computer Vision; Microfluidics; Robotics

Professor Julian A. Tanner
Research interest: Nucleic acid nanotechnology and chemical biology

Professor Jeff S.C. Ti
Research interest: Integrating biochemistry; Chemical biology and single-molecule microscopy to dissect the function and organisation of microtubules

Professor Alan S.L. Wong
Research interest: Genome editing; Protein engineering; Synthetic biology; Combinatorial genetics; Drug target discovery; Disease biology

Professor Jason W.H. Wong
Research interest: Cancer genomics; Mutational processes; Epigenetics; Bioinformatics; Proteomics

Professor Cheng-Han Yu
Research interest: Cell adhesion and cytoskeleton regulation; Podosome and invadopodium; Mechanobiology; Phosphatidylinositol signaling; Fluorescence microscopy

Professor Keda Zhou
Research interest: Epigenetic regulations on chromatin structures in disease, single particle cryo-EM; Biochemistry and biophysics; Protein engineering

Student's Sharing

Nicholas Tze Yin Kwok

- Hong Kong
- PhD Student
- RPG Student Representative
- Supervisor: Professor Joshua Ho

As a local Hongkonger pursuing my PhD in digital health research, with a focus on vascular and heart health, I've found myself at the intersection of cutting-edge technology and critical healthcare challenges. Having called Hong Kong home for over a decade, I've developed a deep appreciation for this vibrant city and its academic institutions.

My experience as a graduate researcher at HKU has been profoundly enriching. I've honed essential skills such as project management, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the delicate balance between intense research periods. The guidance from my supervisors, the camaraderie among my peers, and the administrative support have all contributed significantly to my growth as a researcher. Their collective enthusiasm and expertise continue to inspire me as I navigate the complexities of integrating AI and data science into vascular and heart health research. " Science and everyday life cannot and should not be separated" and I believe this holds in healthcare innovation. It's this blend of technological advancement and real-world application that drives my passion for digital health research and motivates me to contribute meaningfully to the field.

Student's Sharing

Yixin Huang

- Mainland China
- PhD student
- Postgraduate Scholarship awardee
- Supervisor: Professor Tao Ni

The past three years of my PhD journey at HKU have been beyond words in terms of the immense value they have brought me. The outstanding platform facilities and generous support provided by HKU and School of Biomedical Science have truly accelerated the progress of my research. Along the way, I am very grateful to have met outstanding supervisors and colleagues, and I have also formed meaningful friendships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. The plethora of seminars and conferences available has catalyzed expanding my horizons and fostering scientific thinking, providing me with excellent opportunities to exercise my independence. I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of the warm and nurturing HKU family with an environment that fosters growth, learning, and collaboration, making my PhD life an invaluable and unforgettable experience.

Student's Sharing

Chen Jing Khoo

- Malaysian
- PhD student
- Postgraduate Scholarship awardee
- Supervisor: Professor Jeff Shih-Chieh Ti

My first year as a PhD candidate at HKU was marked by a rollercoaster of ups and downs. There were periods when research did not progress as planned and it can be easy to feel demotivated and anxious. However, it is important to remain patient and focused during times like this. In the past year, I have learnt to take a step back to re-evaluate the research question and brainstorm new approaches. It is also helpful to seek guidance from peers, mentors, or professionals who can offer a fresh perspective and valuable insights. I am grateful to my supervisor for fostering a collaborative work environment. We were encouraged to discuss the challenges we faced when conducting experiments. As a team, we work together to overcome these hurdles to make progress in our respective research endeavors.

Student's Sharing

Mun Kay Ho

- Malaysian
- PhD Student
- RPG Student Representative
- Supervisor: Professor Joshua Ho

"Hey guys! I'm Kay, a Malaysian student currently in my 1st year of PhD. I study under the School of Biomedical sciences, Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine, specialising in bioinformatics and computational biology. My research topic centres around the analysis of single-cell RNA sequencing data, focusing on mutation discovery and the identification of its effects on cancer progression. Besides that, I am also part of the HKU RPG Student ambassador program, the HKU Student Ambassador program and the Shun Hing College tutorial team. I'm look forward to meeting all of you and hope you have a great academic year ahead!"

Student's Sharing

Yang Li

- Mainland
- PhD student
- RPG Student Representative
- Supervisor: Professor Pengtao LIU

My research interests lie in immunology and developmental biology. Before joining HKU, I completed my undergraduate and master studies at Oxford focusing on vaccine design and analysis of its immunological responses.

Currently, my work focuses on the derivation of haematopoietic stem cells from pluripotent stem cells, and the subsequent differentiation of these stem cells into immune cells. One key aspect of developmental haematopoiesis is the distinction between primitive and definitive haematopoiesis. Primitive haematopoiesis involves a transient wave of progenitor cell production, while definitive haematopoiesis pertains to the generation of true haematopoietic stem cells. I am interested in defining these two waves at the molecular levels and to recapitulate them in vitro.

Pursuing my PhD at the HKUMed SBMS is a valuable and enriching experience. The resources and support here allow me to make steady progress in my research, and the collaborative atmosphere here provides opportunities to engage with fellow researchers and approach my studies from multiple perspectives. The guidance from faculty members is instrumental in refining my research focus. Being in Hong Kong also allows me to collaborate with researchers from mainland China and the West, broadening the scope and impact of my work.

About Our Research Postgraduate Programme

The School of Biomedical Sciences offers research postgraduate studies leading to Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy (3-year and 4-year) degrees.

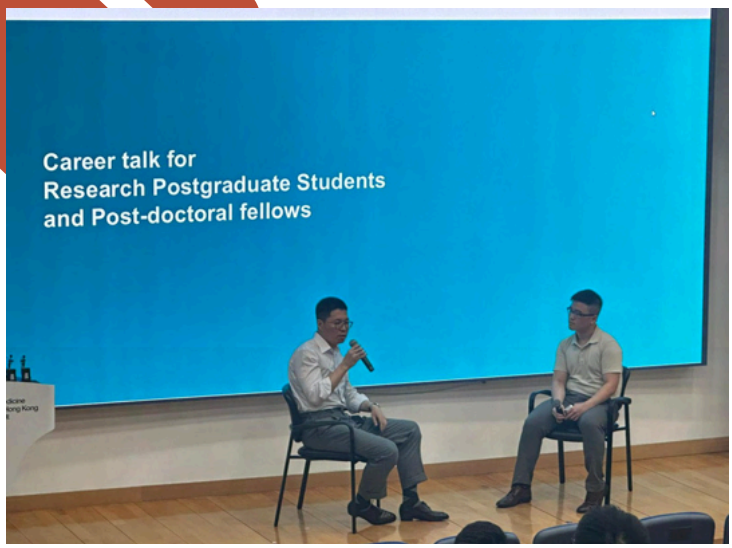
Our research postgraduate curriculum aims not only at providing research postgraduates with excellent training in research, but also providing opportunities for all-round development and the acquirement of life-long skills in communication and critical thinking. The University and Faculty provide training courses in transferable skills e.g. in oral and written English, statistics, technique workshops, presentation skills, thesis writing etc.

We offer a regular fascinating programme of seminars given by local and foreign visiting scientists. We strive to provide postgraduates with opportunities to meet leading scientists through conference participation, academic retreat as well as by arranging special meetings with distinguished visitors.

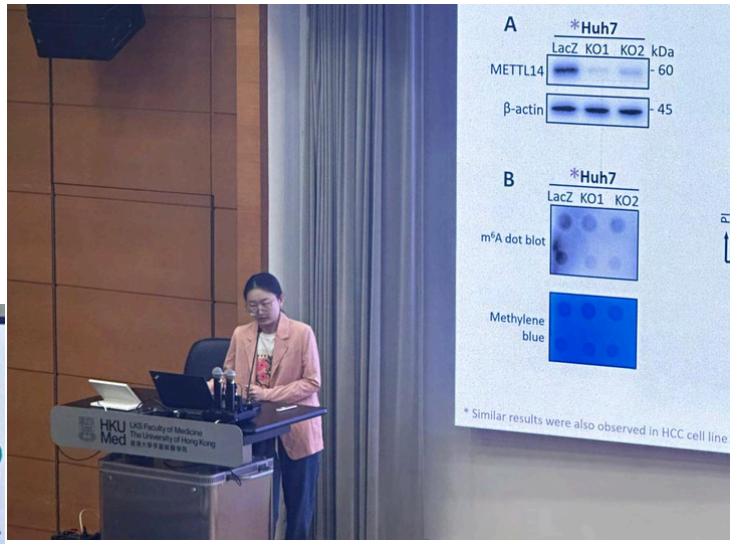
Financial Support

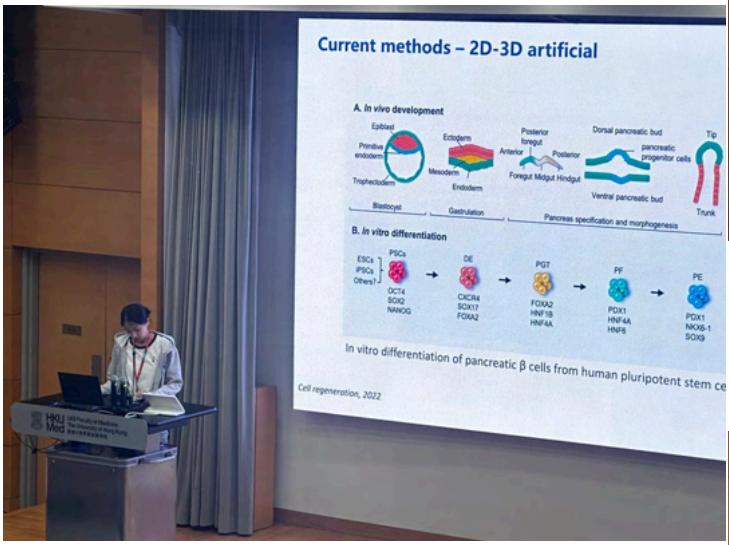
Students registering for MPhil and PhD degrees are supported financially by Postgraduate Scholarships. The University also has provision for conference grants to enable postgraduate students to attend scientific meetings which will provide students with the opportunity to present their research work to fellow scientists from different parts of the world.

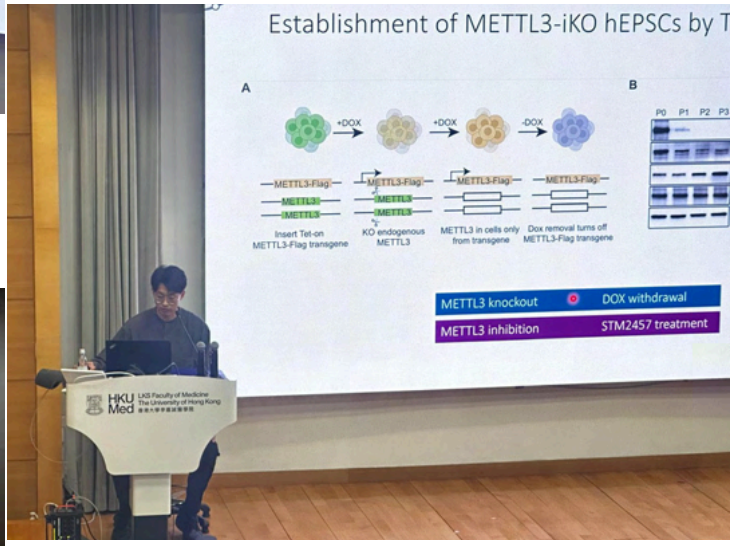
Research Postgraduate Activity - Career Talk



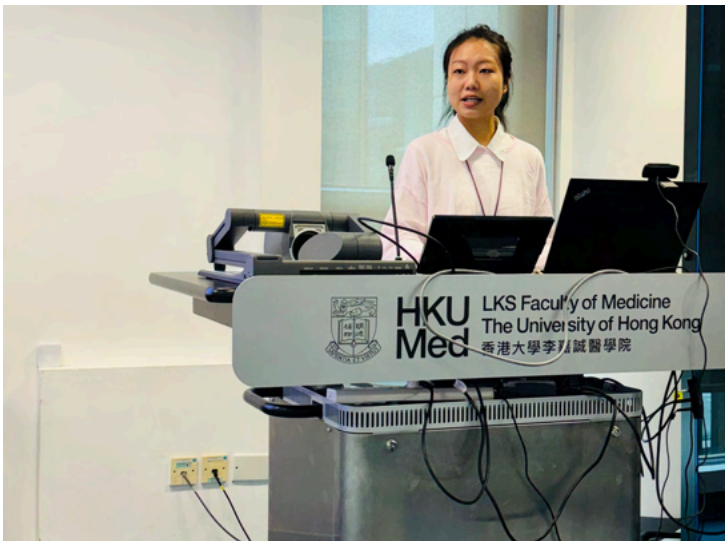
Research Postgraduate Activity - Research Day

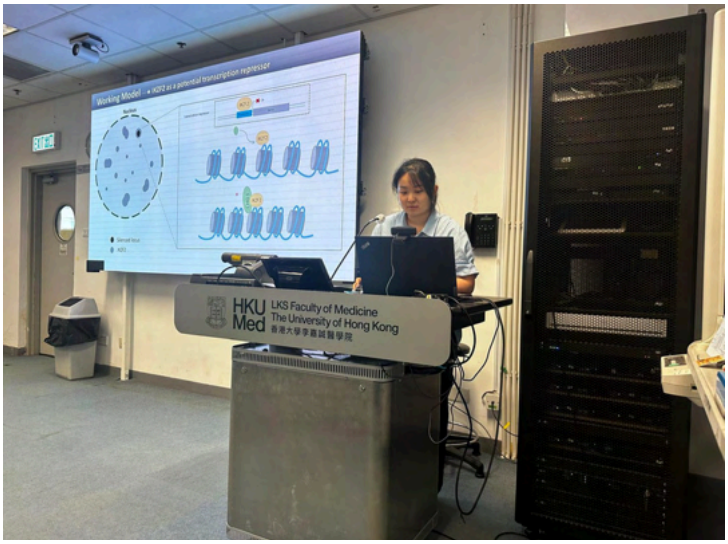






Research Postgraduate Activity – First-year Research Postgraduate Discussion






HKU Med
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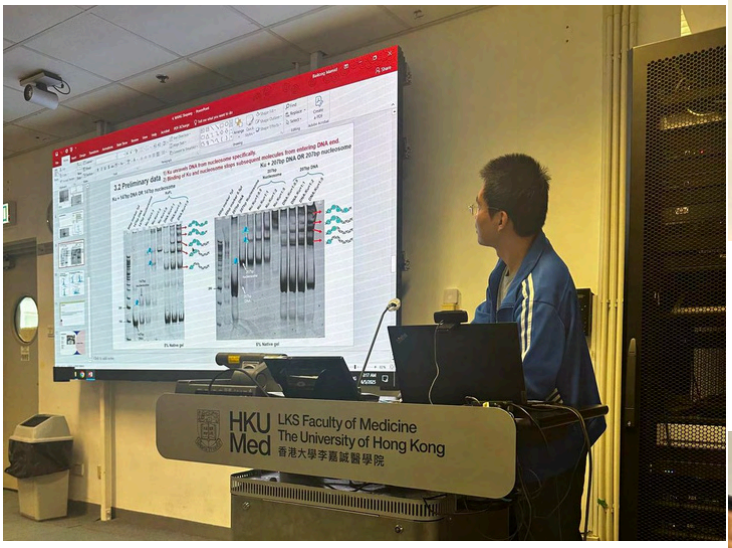
香港大學李嘉誠醫學院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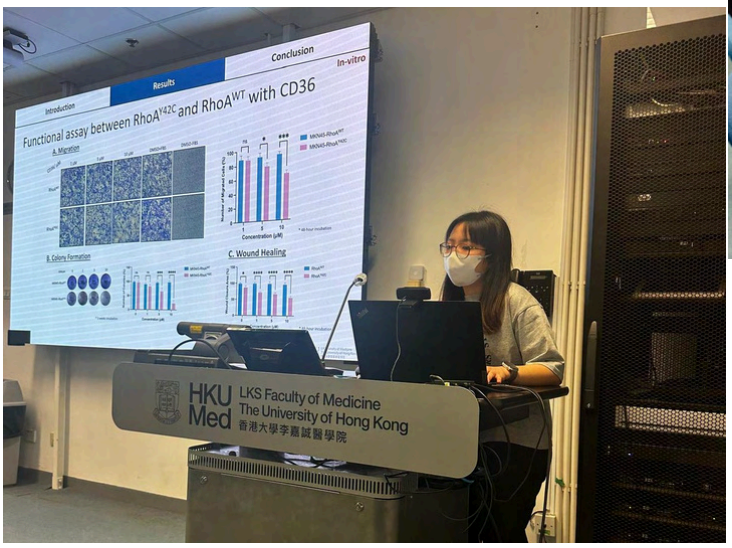
Introduction
Results
Conclusion
In-vitro
Functional assay between RhoA^{Y42C} and RhoA^{WT} with CD36
A. Migration
B. Colony Formation
C. Wound Healing
HKU Med
LKS Faculty of Medicine
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學李嘉誠醫學院

Research Postgraduate Activity - RPG Symposium


HKU Med
LKS Faculty of Medicine
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學李嘉誠醫學院


HKU Med
LKS Faculty of Medicine
The University of Hong Kong
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Research Postgraduate Activity - Inter-University Postgraduate Symposium in Biochemical and Life Sciences

The Hong Kong Inter-University Postgraduate Symposium is an annual event jointly organised by The University of Hong Kong (HKU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST).

The Inter-U Symposium provides an excellent opportunity for students to participate in the exchange and enrichment of knowledge and ideas regarding current research topics in various research fields in biochemistry and molecular biology. Such topics include, but are not limited to, protein biochemistry, structural biology, molecular cell biology, signal transduction, molecular neuroscience, and biotechnology.

Useful Links

School of Biomedical Sciences

School of Biomedical Sciences School Brochure

Application for Research Postgraduate Studies *

Li Ka Shing Faculty of Medicine Research Postgraduate Studies

*The Graduate School is responsible for the admission of research postgraduates. Prospective postgraduate students should apply online to the Graduate School.

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