

MEDIA RELEASE

## Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Welfare Foundation awards research grants to 4 projects that aim to tackle Singapore's social issues

**20 January 2017, SINGAPORE** – This year's winners of the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Welfare Foundation (MSIWF) research grant, awarded for exceptional insight and potential, comprised of some of Singapore's leading researchers that aim to make a difference by solving Singapore's key traffic and healthcare issues for the nation's ageing population.

The 2016 winners are:

- Ms Maria Cecilia Rojas Lopez, PhD candidate at the School of Civil and Environment Engineering at Nanyang Technological University, for her research that will lead to the development of traffic schemes and policies for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians on footpaths. For this project, Rojas Lopez will study cyclists' behaviour and their interaction with other path users, which is a potential issue since bicycles have been allowed on footpaths in Singapore since March 2016.
- Dr Tan Ngiap Chuan is a Family Physician, Senior Consultant and Director, Research at SingHealth Polyclinics. His proposed study aims to find out how common is the age-related loss of muscle mass and muscle function, known as "sarcopenia" among elderly patients. Sarcopenia has been shown to be worse amongst the elderly with diabetes. Muscle weakness resulting from the reduced muscle bulk and strength will subject the elderly to increased risks of frailty, falls, fractures, hospitalisations and even premature deaths. The findings from this study will allow doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals to identify the reasons leading to sarcopenia, so that solutions can be developed and assessed if they are effective in reducing the muscle bulk loss, in maintaining or even strengthening their muscle functions.
- Dr Kinjal Doshi, principal clinical psychologist at Singapore General Hospital, aims to create a better tool for use in identifying loss of functional abilities among the elderly.
- Dr Rufaihah Binte Abdul Jalil, assistant professor at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, will design a diagnostic tool for atherosclerosis, a main illness known to harden the arteries usually affecting the elderly.  
*(Refer to Appendix-1 for more details on the winners and their research projects).*

MSIWF is a non-profit organisation that is part of the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Company, Limited, and supports researchers in Japan, Singapore and Thailand for practicable research in two key areas: senior citizen welfare and traffic safety. The MSIWF research grant is

unique compared to others, as it supports interdisciplinary research at its early stages, where it is generally tougher for researchers to obtain funding elsewhere.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of MSIWF grant support in Singapore, which was introduced in 2007 for the first time outside of Japan. Since then, MSIWF has supported 38 research projects and has disbursed grants worth more than about S\$363,000.

“At MSIG, our focus goes beyond financial profits. It is our mission to help secure a sustainable future for the communities at large. With a growing ageing demographic in Singapore, solutions for improving the quality of life are critical for sustainable growth. This grant from Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Welfare Foundation aims to empower talented researchers to do just that,” said Mr Alan J. Wilson, Regional CEO of MSIG Holdings (Asia) Pte Ltd.

The call for the 2016 grants was launched in June last year, and a total of 246 applications were received globally. The winning projects will conduct their research over the next 12 months and their findings will be published in scientific journals as well as shared with the Foundation during next year’s presentation ceremony in 2018.

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#### About MSIG Insurance (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.

MSIG Insurance Singapore, a member of the MS&AD Insurance Group, is one of Singapore’s leading general insurers. With a local presence of over 100 years, MSIG Singapore offers an extensive range of insurance solutions for commercial and personal risk protection, enabling the security and safety of individuals and businesses. Wholly owned by MSIG Holdings (Asia) Pte Ltd, MSIG Singapore holds an A+/Stable financial rating by Standard & Poor’s.

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#### About Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Welfare Foundation

Founded in 1975 by Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Company in Japan, the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Welfare Foundation (MSIWF) dedicates itself to practicable research in two key areas: **senior citizen welfare** and **traffic safety**. As of 2016, the Foundation has provided more than 1,974 grants with a combined value of JPY 2,295.2 million (SGD 29.90 million). In Singapore, the grant was introduced in 2007, the first by MSIWF outside of Japan. Since then, the Foundation has disbursed SGD 363,296 worth of research grants to 38 projects.

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**APPENDIX -1**
**2016 Research Grant Awardees**

Category	Name of researcher	Designation & Institution	Description of research
Traffic Safety	Ms Rojas Lopez, Maria Cecilia	PhD student, Nanyang Technological University (NTU)	 <p>The use of bicycles (and other PMDs) is increasing in Singapore roads and pathways. The increased traffic can affect safety, especially vulnerable users and pedestrians. This study aims to investigate cyclists' behaviour and develop a model to describe most common behaviours. This model aims to help local and international planners and academic researchers to develop traffic schemes aimed at increasing safety of cyclists and pedestrians on pathways.</p>
Senior Citizen Welfare	Dr Kinjal Doshi	Principal Clinical Psychologist, Singapore General Hospital	 <p>This study aims create a better tool used for identifying loss of functional abilities among the elderly. This research will find out the different ways family members provide care for their elderly relatives (with or without cognitive impairment) in an everyday setting, and the reasons behind their caregiving.</p>
	Dr Rufaihah Binte Abdul Jalil	Assistant Professor, Department of Surgery, NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine	 <p>It is suggested that atherosclerosis is the main disease affecting elderly and this needs to be highlighted as Singapore is advancing towards an ageing population. Atherosclerosis, sometimes known as the hardening of the arteries, can slowly narrow and harden the arteries throughout the body. Clinical manifestations of atherosclerosis will occur in 2 in 3 men and 1 in 2 women after the age of 40. This research aims to determine the Diagnostic potential of LyP-1 Peptide Aptamer for Atherosclerotic Plaques.</p>
	Dr Tan Ngiap Chuan	Senior Consultant/ Director, Department of Research, SingHealth Polyclinics  Adjunct Assistant Professor, DUKE-NUS	 <p>Sarcopenia is the age-related loss of muscle mass and muscle function, which threatens the health and independence of elderly patients. A Malaysian study showed that sarcopenia was more prevalent amongst those with type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM), subjecting them to frailty risks beyond vascular complications. The study aims to determine the prevalence and predictors of sarcopenia among elderly patients with T2DM.</p>