

**SINGAPORE YOUTH AWARDS 2004**  
**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (INDIVIDUAL)**

**DR CHEW FOOK TIM**



*“Confucius said, ‘Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I’ll remember. Involve me and I’ll understand.’ This is how scientists are developed... by being involved and immersed totally in the work so that intimate understanding comes. I am a ‘teacher-scientist’ at heart, and as such, this is what I aspire to practise in my work as a lecturer and researcher.”*

Dr Chew Fook Tim has attained international stature for his outstanding research in the expressed genomes of allergy-causing dust mites. Dr Chew runs a world-class laboratory, which is trying to uncover the mysteries behind allergic diseases such as asthma, one of the world’s top childhood diseases. Asthma affects one in five children and five percent of the adult population in Singapore.



Dr Chew’s laboratory is the only one in the world to have a collection of more than 10,000 tagged genes from allergy-causing dust mites. Through the course of its work, the laboratory has developed tools used by several research groups worldwide, such as a multi-allergen array that rapidly screens for IgE-binding responses in very small volumes of sample, for the diagnosis of allergies.

Dr Chew was the first person to describe the presence of *Blomia tropicalis*, a prevalent but overlooked mite species, which causes allergies and asthma in Singapore. Through his work in the epidemiology and genetics of asthma and allergies, his laboratory contributed significantly to the literature on asthma and allergies in Singapore and the region, and helped to lay the foundation for studies that would help alleviate the effects of such diseases.



Recognition for Dr Chew’s work include the Young Scientist Award at the 1st National University Hospital-National Medical Research Council Annual Scientific Meeting, and the National University of Singapore (NUS) Life Sciences Office Young Investigator Award and Inventors Award (Silver Medal). Dr Chew is also a three-time finalist for the Singapore National

Academy of Science's Young Scientist Award.

A "teacher-scientist" at heart, Dr Chew takes pride not in what he has achieved for himself, but in what students under his charge have achieved. Dr Chew teaches one of the largest cross-faculty modules at the NUS with over 1,000 students per term. He was voted as the NUS Excellent Teacher for two consecutive academic years, and was recently awarded the NUS Faculty Teaching Excellence Award in 2003.

For his scientific excellence, his dedication to nurturing youths and his efforts in motivating and inspiring them to excel in biomedical research, Dr Chew Fook Tim is conferred the Singapore Youth Award 2004.