

World-Class Researcher Touches Down

ACADEMICS EYE POTENTIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS

Collaborations are the essence of scientific research. So for many academics, anytime you find yourself close to a world-class researcher, it's not a bad idea to listen carefully. In a bid to foster more collaborative research between Canada and India, Faculty of Dentistry academics made a successful bid to bring in a leading biochemist from India for a three-day visit.

Prof. Amitabha Chattopadhyay, a world-renowned expert in membrane lipids and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry (UK) visited last November to deliver a series of lectures for academics and graduate students on the Bannatyne Campus. It was part of the Distinguished Visiting Lecture Series launched by the University of Manitoba.

"He is a renowned scientist involved in studying membrane lipid-protein interactions, and an eminent researcher from India" explained Dr. Prashen Chelikani, the Faculty of Dentistry researcher who was the driving force behind the visit. Prof. Chattopadhyay is a prolific researcher with over 200 publications thus far in addition



Learned colleague: Prof. Amitabha Chattopadhyay (above) a highly regarded academic, paid a visit to the Faculty of Dentistry in November as part of the Distinguished Visiting Lecturer Series undertaken by the University of Manitoba.

to being on the editorial board of several well-regarded science journals. His work is focused on monitoring the organization, dynamics and function of biological membranes in healthy and diseased conditions. His group has developed and applied novel, innovative and sensitive techniques (such as the wavelength-selective fluorescence approach) using fluorescence spectroscopy for monitoring solvent relaxation in membranes, membrane-mimetic media and proteins.

The lectures: "GPCR-Cholesterol interaction: A multidimensional approach", and "Fluorescence in Biology: From Solvent Relaxation to Drug Discovery" drew full houses to their respective theatres.

The visit came about via the University of Manitoba's Distinguished Visiting Lecturer series. Each year, the Office of the President makes funding available to support units seeking to bring to the University of Manitoba distinguished individuals who are making outstanding contributions in their respective fields. Members of the university community nominate candidates to be considered.

"This is intended for the broader university community," Dr. Chelikani said. "It was one of the few times I ever saw Theatre C that full".

After obtaining his PhD from the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stony Brook, Prof. Chattopadhyay was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of California, Davis. He subsequently joined the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad, India and is now an Outstanding Scientist (Director level) there.

"It was wonderful visiting the University of Manitoba and meeting and interacting with colleagues and students there," Prof. Chattopadhyay commented following his visit. "The university has a cutting-edge dentistry and oral biology department and it was nice to see how basic research was driven toward patient care. The 'bench to bed' paradigm is therefore truly applicable to Manitoba research."

"We were very pleased the university approved our nomination," Dr. Chelikani said. "Down the road, we could be looking at securing Canada-India research grants".

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