

[The Star Online](#) > Nation

Saturday April 9, 2005

## UM researcher wins inaugural award

**SYDNEY:** Universiti Malaya (UM) immunologist Wong Sook San, who wants to develop a dengue vaccine, has been named the inaugural University of Melbourne Prime Minister of Malaysia Scholar.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is on a three-day visit to Australia, announced the award of the scholarship yesterday on behalf of the university at a ceremony organised by its Asialink Centre here.

The scholarship, a joint initiative of the university and its alumni in Malaysia, is intended to support emerging academic talents in Malaysia in key areas of national importance.



Wong: Wants to develop a dengue vaccine.

It covers tuition and a living allowance for an early career Malaysian researcher to undertake PhD studies in Melbourne in the fields of either engineering, science or medical and health sciences.

Wong, who is doing her Master of Medical Science degree at UM and has a research background in dengue fever viruses, told the University of Melbourne media unit from Kuala Lumpur that she was excited and proud to receive the award.

Dengue fever is an infectious disease carried by mosquitoes and caused by any of four related viruses that affect millions of people globally.

Wong said there were no approved dengue vaccines or therapeutic treatment available, and patients often had to rely solely on supportive treatment for recovery (bed rest, anti-fever medicines and fluids).

“A safe and effective vaccine that will target all four types of dengue viruses and not cause infection is urgently needed,” she said.

Wong explained that her proposed PhD research would focus on developing a “dendritic cell-based dengue vaccine”.

A Bachelor of Biomedical Science graduate of UM, Wong is familiar with Australia through a research attachment in molecular virology at the Queensland University of Technology in 2003.  
—Bernama