HKU PhD Student Features in Forbes 30 Under 30 China List for Engagements in Social Entrepreneurship

Congratulations to Ke Lu, a PhD student in the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, for being featured by Forbes in its 30 Under 30 China Class of 2020 under the Social Entrepreneurs category.

Each of the 10 categories of the Forbes 30 Under 30 China list features 30 young entrepreneurs, leaders, and changemakers from across China, all under the age of 30, who are considered bright and innovative leaders in various fields in China.

Ke’s thesis topic is about the development of grassroots educational nonprofits in China, while his research interests also cover social enterprise, impact investing, and corporate social responsibility. He has engaged in various activities to promote sustainable development in Mainland China. For instance, he has collaborated with Mainland organisations in research on sustainable development value, and written articles and reports to introduce sustainable development finance to a wide audience on popular websites such as Sina and Caijing and other social media platforms. He has also designed and organised activities to empower social enterprises in China, which have supported nearly 200 social enterprises from 2018 to 2020. Ke was also a member of the technical working group that drove the methodology, data, and related aspects for completion of the Technical Report on Sustainable Development Goal Finance Taxonomy (China) 2020 Edition for the United Nations Development Programme.

PhD Student’s Start-up Wins Award at Regional Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition

A start-up called Nasovak co-founded by Jiayan Liu, a PhD student in the Department of Microbiology, has won the Bronze Prize in the start-up group at the 2020 Qianhai Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao-Taiwan Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition.

Nasovak is a preclinical stage biotech start-up developing next generation cancer vaccines to address highly unmet medical needs, with a mission of eradicating virus-associated cancers. Their core technology is a proprietary nasal spray vaccine platform technology developed by the research group of Professor Hong Lin Chen, Jiayan’s supervisor at HKU.

Cancer is causing an increasing global disease burden, yet up to 20% of cancer cases can be prevented by vaccination as they are linked with viral infections. Preventing these viral infections can reduce the incidence of virus-associated cancers and save lives, as demonstrated by HPV vaccines in the prevention of cervical cancer. Another cancer-causing virus, the Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), infects more than 95% of the global adult population. While most infected individuals are asymptomatic, EBV infection is linked with an increased risk of deadly cancers and disabling autoimmune diseases. Annual worldwide healthcare costs of EBV-linked complications were estimated to exceed US$ 1.5 billion in 2019. Currently, there is no approved vaccine against EBV on the market. A vaccine that can prevent or reduce EBV infection is expected to be quickly adopted by clinical communities globally following market approval.

Nasovak aims to create a novel prophylactic vaccine against EBV, with an objective of preventing EBV infection and EBV infection associated diseases, such as nasopharyngeal cancer, other cancers, and autoimmune diseases. The vaccine’s target users are seronegative children, who have not yet been exposed to EBV.
Revisiting and Rethinking Fieldwork and Ethnography under COVID-19

Ethnography is a set of participatory, observational, and communicative methods to study people. It has been widely applied in anthropology, sociology, public health, communication, education, history, arts, and other disciplines. Ethnographers rely on immersive fieldwork online and offline to collect first-hand data.

While the COVID-19 situation poses ongoing challenges for ethnographers, it is also producing opportunities to reimagine fieldwork itself. PhD student Yichen Rao in the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HKIHSS) has teamed up with fellow PhD students in the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, University of Queensland, and University of California, Davis and designed a project that aims to advance digital ethnography not simply as ‘fieldwork online’ but as a broad system of mindsets, toolkits, and strategies to understand human interconnectedness beyond a narrow boundary of empiricism. The team wishes to set up a platform for mutual support and collaborative ethnography. The project has been awarded through the Universitas 21 (U21) Researcher Resilience Fund, which aims to help develop the capability and capacity of PhD and early career researchers in the U21 network to work digitally in order to adapt to life as a researcher post-COVID-19.

During 2020, the team carried out biweekly reading groups on digital ethnography and COVID challenges through Slack, inviting young scholars from all over the world to participate. Through the reading groups, they realised that the core challenge for ethnographic research today is not how researchers can overcome the physical distance from the informants’ locality, but how they can make sense of the shared everyday ethnographic moments of ‘digital’ under COVID – people are ‘Zoom-ing’ in and out every day to build up connections without a chance to reflect. Therefore, the team launched an experimental workshop with the support of the U21 Researcher Resilience Fund to form a deeper understanding of body politics and the critical phenomenology of living a ‘forced’ digital life.

Yichen and his counterparts have designed a workshop titled ‘Feeling Digital and Reimagining Fieldwork during COVID Time’, with Anna Cruz Benavidez, an anthropologist and theatre director, as their coach. Selected participants will conduct a set of experimental and auto-ethnographic fieldwork sessions in groups by using digital devices to perform critical ‘body-theatres’ designed and coordinated by Anna.

The experimental fieldwork will be recorded and ethnographic diaries will be produced to reflect upon these experiences. These recordings/diaries will be shared and discussed by outstanding scholars in anthropology, sociology, media, and performance studies through a virtual workshop in May 2021, hosted by the HKIHSS, the HKU Anthropology Network, and the Department of Sociology. The workshop’s outputs will be co-authored articles and other creative works based on the recordings and ethnographic diaries, followed by the discussants’ commentaries.
In the early 1990s, in a schoolyard in Hong Kong, a group of teenage girls sit on a shady bench in the corner. They laugh, huddle together, and then laugh again – their group opening and shutting like a beautiful flower. One starts humming a tune and the others join in with the lyrics, “In your head, in your head,” they chorus. It’s the current popular hit from The Cranberries, who are still the favourite band of one of those teenage girls in the courtyard – Dr Christy Hui Lai Ming.

For Dr Hui, the lines of this song were to be particularly significant. In form 6 she chose psychology – the scientific study of the mind and behaviour. Not a predictable choice for a young girl, at that time, but in her words, “Girls like talking and sharing…most of the time I listened to other people. When they had problems, they brought them to me. I’m a good listener.”

Ready to be challenged further, Christy entered HKU, where as an undergraduate her academic talents were nurtured and fully engaged. She graduated first in psychology and then branched out into psychiatry, completing her PhD in 2009. Her focus was on schizophrenia.

“Schizophrenia is a difficult, challenging, and complicated illness to study,” Dr Hui explains. “Sufferers of this disease have hallucinations and delusions that are so real to them, yet for other people they are often difficult to understand.” However, this hasn’t dissuaded her from following a dedicated path of research, especially in relapse prevention, maintenance treatment, and long-term outcomes of early psychosis, for which she has gained much recognition.

Dr Hui’s many achievements and accolades include receiving the Young Scientist Award twice at the Biennial Winter Workshop on Schizophrenia Research, particularly memorable for the trips to Switzerland to give her presentations. She recalls her trepidation when she took to the stage to present her work to a large audience of experienced, widely respected academics. For other young presenters facing this nerve-wracking experience, she offers the following advice: “With good ideas and good data, people will pay attention.”

Apart from scientific discovery and knowledge advances, translation is also an important aspect in academic work. “I participate in the Early Psychosis Foundation, a charitable organisation set up in 2007 to make knowledge and experience gained from research and clinical practice more accessible and to promote high-quality early psychosis intervention programmes in the community,” Dr Hui says. With the Foundation’s emphasis on outcome improvement and de-stigmatisation, these initiatives have enabled her to reach out into the community in a very practical way.

Dr Hui’s favourite coffee kiosk is at the Faculty of Medicine Building, and she may often be seen grabbing a cup before returning to work on her latest projects. Based on local experience and research, she is currently developing an educational tool to help both psychoses patients and their carers to prevent relapses in psychosis.

“What’s in your head?” the Cranberries’ lyrics ask. Dr Hui will continue to look for answers to that one. Like the young Christy, she is still a good listener and is still helping others as she constantly seeks ways in which to understand the burdens of psychoses patients and to put sound research into practice.
Shuangzhou Chen, a PhD student from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration, has won the Universitas 21 (U21) Graduate Collaborative Research Award 2020 for a project targeting dementia caregivers. The awarded project is titled ‘Making sense of work-life-care balance and well-being among dementia caregivers during the period of pandemic: An application of ecological momentary assessment using digital device’.

Caregivers of dementia patients suffer from both physical problems and psychological symptoms due to the cognitive decline, communicative difficulties, and behavioral problems of their care recipients living with dementia. The current project mainly aims to investigate the hedonic and social well-being of adult-child working dementia caregivers as well as to explore the profiles of caregivers who make choices on the meaning-making of care, work, and/or life. The method of ecological momentary assessment will be adopted to collect data via personal digital devices for investigating participants’ momentary well-being and mental states within their caregiving experience during the pandemic. Collaborating with doctoral students in various disciplines from other U21 member universities – namely Fudan University, the National University of Singapore, the University of Maryland, and the University of Queensland – the project also aims to establish an empirical and theoretical foundation for developing a more integrative assessment and intervention tool built for digital devices.

PhD Candidate Receives U21 Graduate Collaborative Research Award for Research on the Well-being of Caregivers of Dementia Patients

New Graduate School Member

The Graduate School is pleased to announce that Professor Billy K.C. Chow has been appointed as Associate Dean (Scholarships and China Affairs) of the Graduate School with effect from January 18, 2021, joining the Dean and other Associate Deans in leading the work of the Graduate School.

Professor Chow is Professor and Chair of Endocrinology in the School of Biological Sciences. He is an eminent scientist in the area of comparative endocrinology and neuroscience. In recognition of his academic contributions, he has received international research awards including the Grace Pickford Medal, Akira Arimura Young Investigator Award, University of British Columbia Alumni Builder Award, and Croucher Senior Research Fellowship, as well as the HKU Outstanding Researcher Award and Research Output Prize.

Professor Chow has been contributing continuously to the University – he has served as the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Science, Master of the Graduate House, and Acting Director of the School of Biological Sciences. Currently, he is the Chair of the Committee on Halls and Vice-Chair of the Catering Committee of the University.

Professor Chow will be overseeing new initiatives of the Graduate School, including the HKU Presidential PhD Scholar Programme and HKU Summer Research Programme. Our warmest welcome is extended to Professor Chow.
Congratulations to the Graduate School Award Winners

The Graduate School is proud to announce the winners of the following awards:

**University Postgraduate Fellowships Scheme (2020-21)**

The University Postgraduate Fellowships Scheme is generously supported by The University of Hong Kong Foundation for Educational Development and Research (HKU Foundation), the Hui Pun Hing Endowment Fund, the Jessie & George Ho Charitable Foundation, Dr Lee Shau Kee, and the Philip K.H. Wong Foundation. This year, a total of 57 incoming elite PhD students have received the Fellowship.

**HKU Presidential PhD Scholarship (2020-21)**

The HKU Presidential PhD Scholarship was launched in 2020-21 to offer the most prestigious package to selected outstanding full-time PhD students admitted to HKU. A total of 48 incoming PhD students have been awarded the Scholarship this year.

**Awards for Outstanding Research Postgraduate Students (2018-19)**

The Awards for Outstanding Research Postgraduate Students give due recognition to research postgraduate students who have submitted a thesis of exceptional quality and demonstrated outstanding performance in other academic aspects.

Dr CHANG Qingsong (PhD, Department of Social Work and Social Administration)
CHO Hin Ting Frankie (MPhil, Department of Geography)
HUANG Chor Mei (MPhil, School of Biomedical Sciences)
Dr LAN Xinmiao (PhD, Faculty of Dentistry)
Dr LEE Chin Ho (PhD, Department of Chemistry)
Dr LEUNG Ming Yi (PhD, Department of Chemistry)
Dr MO Jiawei (PhD, Faculty of Business and Economics)
Dr OUYANG Kaibin (PhD, School of Chinese)
Dr YU Ollie Yiru (PhD, Faculty of Dentistry)
Dr ZHU Guangxu (PhD, Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering)

**Li Ka Shing Prizes (2018-19)**

The Li Ka Shing Prizes are highly competitive and the recipients are the best of our elite students, having submitted the best theses in the Humanities and the Science Faculty groups respectively.

**Best MPhil thesis in the Faculties of Architecture, Arts, Business & Economics, Education, Law and Social Sciences**
LEE Wa Lun (School of Chinese)

**Best MPhil thesis in the Faculties of Dentistry, Engineering, Medicine and Science**
YIU Pei Tung Stephanie (Department of Paediatrics and Adolescent Medicine)

**Best PhD theses in the Faculties of Architecture, Arts, Business & Economics, Education, Law and Social Sciences**
Dr CHEN Zifeng (Department of Urban Planning and Design)
Dr SARMAN Sanja (School of Humanities (Philosophy))

**Best PhD theses in the Faculties of Dentistry, Engineering, Medicine and Science**
Dr TANG Xin (Department of Mechanical Engineering)
Dr CHEN Mengnuo (Department of Pathology)

Our warmest congratulations to all the winners on your accomplishments!
Communication Skills Workshops Conducted by OKAY MINDS

In today’s world, most job classifications in any field require effective communication skills, which were labelled in a 2016 LinkedIn survey as amongst the most sought-after skills. To conduct research effectively, students need to possess strong communication skills, as well as good interpersonal skills, to discuss their work with their supervisors, peers, or other team members, and to request information and/or resources. If information is not transferred in the right way or at the right time, the tasks may be incomplete or done incorrectly, resulting in unmet goals and reduced productivity. Moreover, when the information is not transferred correctly to the right people, some miscommunication and misunderstanding may occur, bringing about mental stress and anxiety and sometimes even leading to severe outcomes. For instance, an RPg student might think the supervisor has said one thing, while other team members think otherwise. In this case, how can the RPg and supervisor work towards the same goal and increase productivity?

In March 2021, two interesting Zoom workshops on the topic of the ‘Communication Gap between Students and Supervisors and Its Impact on Productivity’ were delivered by Dr Nimisha Vandan, our HKU alumnus and founder of OKAY MINDS, and Dr Amit Wanchoo, CEO of Space Communications and one of the 2018 AsiaGlobal Fellows. In workshop 1, students were introduced to the communication mechanisms and different barriers that may create a communication gap. Negative consequences of the communication gap on mental health were discussed thoroughly, and some tips and tools were provided to overcome anxiety and stress. A technique named ‘GAP’ was recommended, and students were encouraged to use it and share their experiences in the second workshop, which was conducted three days later. Workshop 2 discussed the ‘Johari Window Model’ to raise participants’ self-awareness of and reflection on their own interpersonal communication style and to identify their areas for improvement using a self-disclosure and feedback process. Along with the techniques, the workshops also discussed mental resiliency, which helps participants to establish a positive and productive communication style.

The Graduate School would like to take this opportunity to thank the two speakers for their open sharing and practical advice to help students to develop a healthy and productive mindset for their personal and professional development.