



## **MALAYSIAN DOCTOR WINS PRESTIGIOUS GLOBAL AWARD FOR CANCER RESEARCH**

*Kuala Lumpur, Wednesday, 5 April 2023*

Malaysian **Dr Woo Yin Ling** has won the prestigious **2023 Rachel Pearline Award** in recognition of her global contribution to cancer research and practice in low-and middle-income countries.

Dr Woo, 50, a Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Malaya and a consultant gynaecological oncologist at the University Malaya Medical Centre (UMMC), completed her specialist and subspecialty training in gynaecological oncology in the UK. She was conferred her PhD by Cambridge University for her post-doctoral research on human papillomavirus (HPV) immuno-biology.

She spent 21 years studying medicine and working abroad before returning in 2010 as a clinician scientist focusing on service development and research programs with an emphasis on gynaecological cancers.

Prof Woo conceptualized and executed Program ROSE (**R**emoving **O**bstacles to cervical **S**cr**E**ening), an innovative cervical screening program incorporating HPV self-sampling.

Program ROSE was launched in January 2019 by the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Dato' Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail. The program is the initiative of ROSE Foundation whose goal is to make Malaysia one of the first countries in the region to be free of cervical cancer, the second most common cancer locally among women under 44 years of age.

Instead of the conventional pap smear conducted by a healthcare professional in a clinic or hospital which involves a pelvic examination, Program ROSE offers women the choice of using a self-swab, a quick, painless and effective approach to enable HPV PCR tests to be undertaken.

The tests are processed at ROSE Foundation's own laboratory which provides a centralized cervical screening service using HPV testing, and the results are delivered straight to the women's mobile phones via SMS or WhatsApp. Women who test positive for HPV are then connected to the nearest tertiary hospital for treatment.

Since 2019, Program ROSE has screened more than 23,000 women throughout peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, with most of them from the underprivileged and underserved community.



The Rachel Pearline Award is named after Dr Rachel Pearline, an American who was a respected oncology fellow and who died at the age of 38 in November 2015 from gastric cancer. In 2016, Dr Pearline herself received the award named in her memory posthumously. Dr Pearline was committed to global cancer control and viewed the practice of medicine as a privilege, always striving to serve her patients better.

Every year, in her honor, the Annual Symposium on Global Cancer Research (ASGCR) Steering Committee invites nominations for the award and chooses one outstanding professional who embodies virtue and eminence in cancer research, practice, and/or training in a low-and middle-income country (LMIC).

The ASGCR is the flagship meeting of the United States' National Cancer Institute Center for Global Health. It brings together people in global oncology to discuss trends in global cancer research and control and map out collaborative efforts to move the field forward.

The awardee is recognized at the Rachel Pearline Award Ceremony and gives a keynote address that highlights their contributions to cancer research, practice, and/or training in an LMIC setting, and their future perspectives. Prof Woo, the first Southeast Asian to win the award, will be delivering her keynote address virtually from Kuala Lumpur on Thursday, April 6, 2023 during the ASGCR.

On receiving the award, Prof Woo said: "It is a great honor for Malaysia. This recognition is a testament that Malaysians can achieve so much if we work together. Program ROSE is the culmination of a huge collaborative effort from many Malaysians who believe in the vision of a cervical cancer-free Malaysia."

Dr Satish Gopal, Director of the National Cancer Institute Center for Global Health, described Prof Woo as a remarkable global health leader who has dedicated her career to ensuring that women have equitable access to proven cervical cancer control measures no matter where they live.

"Under her leadership, Malaysia is helping all of us chart a path toward achieving the WHO goal of eliminating cervical cancer worldwide, and I am confident that we will have much to learn from the continued successes of Professor Woo and Program ROSE going forward," he said.

Prof Margaret Stanley, Prof Woo's supervisor at Cambridge University who nominated her for the award, said: "Rachel Pearline viewed the practice of medicine as a privilege, always striving to serve her patients better, a statement which describes Professor YinLing Woo. She is an inspirational and transformational doctor whose innovative cervical screening programme – Program ROSE has transformed the prospects for secondary prevention of cervical cancer in Malaysia and is a model for low and middle-income countries. YinLing Woo is a remarkable



woman who makes a difference as did Rachel Pearline. She is more than a worthy recipient of this award.”

Prof Woo is also the clinical lead for Every Woman Study (EWS-LMIC), an initiative of the World Ovarian Cancer Coalition to identify challenges and opportunities to improve the survival rate and quality of life for women suffering from ovarian cancer.

She is currently the country representative for the Asia-Oceania Research Organisation in Genital Infection and Neoplasia (AOGIN), member of the Asia Pacific Economic Consortium (APEC) Cervical Cancer working group, committee member for policy at the International Papillomavirus Society (IPVS) and a founding trustee of ROSE Foundation.

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For more information or to interview Prof Woo Yin Ling, kindly contact Serena Lim at ROSE Foundation [012-6663254].

To listen to Prof Woo’s keynote address at the Rachel Pearline Award Ceremony on Thursday April 6, 2023 at 11pm Malaysian time, go to <https://nci.rev.vbrick.com/#/webcasts/11annualgcr>

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#### About ROSE Foundation

ROSE Foundation is a non-profit organisation established in 2019 with the vision of cervical cancer elimination in Malaysia. The foundation’s mission is to deliver cervical screening to women in Malaysia using the unique and innovative Program ROSE approach, primarily focusing on the underserved and underprivileged population. More information about ROSE Foundation is available at <https://www.programrose.org/>