



中藥質量研究國家重點實驗室(澳門大學) Laboratório de Referência do Estado para Investigação de Qualidade em Medicina Chinesa (Universidade de Macau) State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine (University of Macau)



中華醫藥研究院 Instituto de Ciências Médicas Chinesas Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences

# ICMS NEWSLETTER ISSUE 01/ JANUARY 2024



International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Natural Products 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Pharmaceutical Sciences University of Macau, Macau SAR, 2023

# **NEWS & FEATURES**

- Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology Research Workshop
- 2023 NSFC-FDCT Frontier Discipline Forum
- 2023 Macao Forum of Chinese Medical Sciences
- 1st International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Natural Products and 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Inauguration of Traditional Medicine Innovation Alliance

# 2023 University of Macau - Tsinghua University Workshop on Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology Research



2023 Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology Research Workshop

From 17 to 24 December 2023, the University of Macau (UM) and Tsinghua University successfully convened a week-long "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology Research Workshop." Led by Prof. Xin Chen, Director of the Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS) at UM, alongside Deputy Director of Academic Affairs and Education Prof. Jiahong Lu and Prof. Chon-Kit Chou, 12 UM students engaged in a productive exchange with Tsinghua University faculty members and students, laying the groundwork for future collaboration.

On the inaugural day, the School of Medicine at Tsinghua University, represented by Prof. Xiaoyu Hu and Prof. Yan Shi, warmly welcomed UM students and faculty. The day began with introductions of both institutes, teaching standards, and research platforms, followed by a four-hour seminar on "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology." This paved the way for deeper collaboration between the universities in these fields. Three UM professors shared their insights into regulating the immune and nervous systems using traditional Chinese medicine. Moreover, three UM professors served as judges for the doctoral course "Critical Thinking in Immunology," acquiring comprehensive understanding of Tsinghua а University's doctoral research training.

The following day, a delegation from ICMS visited the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Peking University. They engaged in in-depth discussions with the Dean of the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Prof. Min Ye, as well as two Vice Deans, Prof. Zhuo Huang and Prof. Yiguang Wang, and their team regarding research collaboration and the joint cultivation of expertise in pharmacology. Subsequently, ICMS representatives visited Tsinghua University's School of Pharmaceutical Sciences to discuss future student exchange initiatives. Prof. Ligong Chen from Tsinghua expressed continuous support for academic exchanges and introduced a two-month Amgen Scholars Program for student summer exchanges.



ICMS Director Prof. CHEN led the delegation to visit the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Peking University



Visiting the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Tsinghua University and engaging in discussions

Over the seven-day research workshop, PhD students from both universities shared research progress and participated in lively discussions. The workshop also included featured courses such as "The Power of Vaccines", "Frontiers of Biomedical Forum", and "Introduction to Basic Medicine and Diseases". Additionally, UM students visited Schwarzman College, Tsinghua University History Museum, and school-level scientific research platforms. On the last day of the event, UM students visited Changping Laboratory and biotechnology companies such as SineuGene and China Immunotech, gaining deeper insights into cutting-edge technologies in life sciences and pharmacy fields, learning the experience of translating findings from basic research into promising clinical applications.

At closing ceremony, ICMS the student representatives, Yibo Chen and Hong U Fong, expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality from Tsinghua University. They were particularly impressed by Tsinghua's school-level research platforms and eagerly anticipated closer cooperation between the two universities in traditional Chinese medicine and immunology.

This collaborative initiative was guided by the Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan Office of Tsinghua University and hosted by the Department of Basic Medical Sciences, School of Medicine, Tsinghua University. The two-year preparation for the event, initiated in 2021, resulted in a successful collaboration under the theme "Traditional Chinese Medicine and Immunology." The project received funding from the "Ten Thousand Student Exchange Program" a student project of the 2023 Mainland and Hong Kong/Macau Student Exchange Program of the Ministry of Education.



Group photo at the closing ceremony of the workshop

### **2023 NSFC-FDCT Frontier Discipline Forum**

In order to implement the central policy "One Country, Two Systems" of the Chinese government and promote the development of Macau's health industry, as well as strengthen cooperation and communication between mainland China and Macau scientists, the "2023 NSFC-FDCT Frontier Discipline Forum" jointly organized by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and Macao Science and Technology Development Fund (FDCT) was held from 5 December to 8 December in Harbin, Heilongjiang Province.

This forum focuses on the inheritance and development of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). More than ten professors from UM and other institutions participated, led by Kuai Lam Ip, FDCT Administrative Committee member. Yongtao Zhang, NSFC Acting Director of the Bureau of International Cooperation and Director of the Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan Affairs Office, led experts and scholars from Harbin Medical University, Heilongjiang University of Chinese Medicine, Institute of Medicinal Plant Development of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Academy of Military Medical Sciences, Shanghai University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and other mainland institutions to attend the forum.



Prof. Xiuping Chen from ICMS gave a presentation

Yongtao Zhang and Kuai Lam Ip delivered speeches expressing the support of NSFC and FDCT for promoting research cooperation in the field of TCM between mainland China and Macau. They encouraged the participating experts to research progress exchange and share achievements during the forum, and provide suggestions for the high-quality development of TCM. Academician Baofeng Yang from Harbin Medical University delivered a keynote speech on "Promoting the High-Quality Development of TCM through Interdisciplinary Integration." Following that ICMS director Xin Chen gave an invited talk on "Therapeutic Significance of Targeting TNFR2 with Small Molecules in Traditional Chinese Medicine." Professors Shaoping Li, Xiuping Chen, Jiahong Lu, Defang Ouyang, Ying Wang, and Ying Bian from ICMS also delivered presentations at the forum. In total, 27 experts from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau in the field of TCM gave presentations, covering various aspects such as new theories, strategies, and methods for the innovative development of TCM. The participating experts engaged in in-depth discussions and shared their opinions on the high-quality development of TCM. They agreed that focusing on the clinical effectiveness and safety of TCM and aiming for its modernization, internationalization, as well as industrialization via multidisciplinary collaborative innovation are the core elements of high-quality TCM development. The participants unanimously agreed to formulate the "2023 Harbin Consensus on High-Quality Development of Traditional Chinese Medicine" and release it to the industry after the forum.

This forum was funded by NSFC and FDCT, with Heilongjiang University of Chinese Medicine as the host institution.



ICMS director Xin Chen gave an invited talk at the forum



# 2023 Macao Forum of Chinese Medical Sciences

The "2023 Macao Forum of Chinese Medical Sciences" series of events were held from 3 December to 6 December 2023 at the University of Macau (UM). The forum was organized by the International Society for Chinese Medicine, coorganized by the Macao Centre for Research and Development in Chinese Medicine, Association of Chinese Medicine, and SCI journal *Chinese Medicine*, with sponsorship from the Macao Foundation.

Zhiliang Wu, president of the Macao Foundation, lek Long Lo, director of the Health Bureau of Macao SAR, Peng Cheong Choi, director of the Pharmaceutical Supervision and Administration Bureau of Macao SAR, Weng Keong Che, president of the Administrative Committee of the Science and Technology Development Fund of Macao SAR, Yonghua Song, rector of UM, Hui Mo, director of the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Traditional Medicine presented speeches ad congratulatory messages. Academicians, scholars, and young talents from both domestic and overseas delivered outstanding keynote speeches in the forum. Teams from more than ten renowned universities at home and aboard participated in the "5th Innovation & Entrepreneurship Contest of CMS". The forum promoted the Chinese medicine industry in Macao and advance the inheritance, innovation, and globalization of Chinese medicine.



Prof. Yitao Wang, founding director of ICMS and director of the Macao Centre for Research and Development in Chinese Medicine delivered a speech: Inheriting innovation • R&D transformation • Empowering Macao • Going global



5<sup>th</sup> Innovation & Entrepreneurship Contest of CMS Awarding Ceremony



# 1st International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Natural Products 1st International Symposium on Pharmaceutical Sciences

The Institute of Chinese Medical Sciences (ICMS) and the State Key Laboratory of Quality Research in Chinese Medicine (SKLQRCM) of UM jointly held the 1st International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Natural Products and the 1st International Symposium on Pharmaceutical Sciences from 26 October to 28 October 2023.

More than 300 experts, researchers, and students from Australia, South Korea, Singapore, mainland China, Macao, and Hong Kong attended the symposium. Speaking at the event, Prof. Wei Ge, vice rector of UM, said that UM has attached great importance to the research and development of Chinese medicine and has made good progress in the industrialisation of Chinese medicine, adding that UM will continue to promote international cooperation in the field. The symposium featured a series of 31 talks on cutting-edge research and innovative technologies in Chinese medicine, natural products, and pharmaceutical sciences, covering topics such as novel technologies for ensuring the quality of traditional Chinese medicine, molecular targets for immunotherapy, progress in clinical research and drug regulation, frontiers in drug discovery, innovations in pharmaceutical products and drug delivery, and the Outstanding Scientific Publication Forum.



10 postgraduate students participated in the symposium were awarded the SLB Trainee Outstanding Research Award sponsored by the Society for Leukocyte Biology.



Prof. Shao Feng, member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, was the keynote speaker of the symposium and gave a talk on his research on pyroptosis over the years.



International Symposium on Chinese Medicine and Natural Products 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Pharmaceutical Sciences University of Macau, Macau SAR, 2023

# **15th UM Scholar Research Forum**

The 15th UM Scholar Research Forum entitled 'Building the First Line of Defense for the Safety of Chinese Medicines with Modern Technology', was held on 24 November 2023 at the University of Macau. Prof. Peng Li from ICMS, was the speaker. The talk was attended by a full house of audience, with many secondary students and teachers watching it online as well.

During the talk, Prof. Li gave a detailed explanation of the main factors affecting the safety of Chinese medicines and presented how modern technologies can be used to ensure the safety of Chinese medicines. Participants actively engaged in the Q&A session and some said that the talk enabled them to acquire a deeper understanding of the safety of Chinese medicines



Prof. Peng Li, deputy director (research and technology transfer) of ICMS gave a talk.

# UM rector leads delegation to visit top universities in South Korea and signs cooperation agreements

Yonghua Song, rector of UM, led a delegation to visit several top universities in South Korea, such as Korea University, Ewha Womans University, Sungkyunkwan University, Kyung Hee University, Yonsei University, and Hanyang University, to expand the university's international network. Members of the UM delegation included Xin Chen, director of ICMS, Ruibing Wang, professor of ICMS and director of the Global Affairs Office, and Oi Lam Ung, programme director of ICMS. During the visits, a number of cooperation agreements were signed and discussions were held to explore joint training of innovative talent with international competitiveness. Representatives of UM's ICMS also paid a visit to the College of Korean Medicine of Kyung Hee University to discuss research collaboration and organising academic conferences in the field of traditional medicine.



UM and Kyung Hee University signed a student exchange agreement

# Inauguration of Traditional Medicine Innovation Alliance



The inauguration ceremony of the Traditional Medicine Innovation Alliance is held online

To improve the level of cooperation in traditional medicine innovation, the University of Macau (UM) took the initiative to establish the Traditional Medicine Innovation Alliance with top universities and research institutes in Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and South Korea. The inauguration ceremony and first board of directors meeting of the alliance was held on 10 October 2023.

Initiated by UM, the National University of Singapore, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre in Malaysia, and Seoul National University in South Korea, the alliance will bring together experts and institutes in traditional medicine in the region to create a new landscape for the traditional medicine industry in Asia. Speaking at the ceremony, Yonghua Song, rector of UM, said that the alliance will contribute to the Macao SAR's economic diversification and the high-quality development of the Chinese medicine industry in Macao. He also expressed hope that the alliance members will work together to improve the level of cooperation between Asian universities and research institutes in traditional medicine innovation and the commercialisation of research results, and develop in-depth cooperation in the areas of resource sharing, research collaboration, talent cultivation, collaborative innovation, and social services.



Yonghua Song, rector of UM, and UM representatives

# ICMS research projects receive grants from NSFC



The National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) announced the result of grant applications for 2023. Dr. Ruibing Feng and Dr. Guodong Li, research assistant professors at ICMS received grants from the NSFC Young Scientists Fund.

# Academic visits to ICMS

#### **Delegation of National Health Commission**

Haichao Lei, vice-minister and deputy secretary of the Leading Party Members' Group of the National Health Commission, led a delegation to visit ICMS and SKL-QRCM on 19 December 2023. The delegation was accompanied by UM Rector Prof. Yonghua Song. They were warmly welcomed by Prof. Peng Li, deputy director of ICMS, and Prof. Yuan-Jia Hu.





#### **Delegation from National Development and Reform Commission**

Director of the Department of Regional Opening-up at the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Jianping Xu led a delegation with representatives from several central ministries to visit ICMS and SKLQRCM on 14 December 2023, accompanied by UM Rector Yonghua Song. They were warmly received by ICMS director and SKLQRCM director, Xin Chen and a team of principal investigators.

# Delegation of Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research (OSCAR) University of Oxford

A delegation led by Prof. Zhanfeng Cui, founding director of Oxford Suzhou Centre for Advanced Research (OSCAR) University of Oxford, visited ICMS for collaborations on 14 December 2023. They were warmly received by ICMS director, Prof. Xin Chen and Dr. Wai San Cheang.





#### **Delegation of CPPCC Anhui Provincial Committee**

Liangzhi Tang, chairman of the Anhui Provincial Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), led a delegation to visit ICMS and SKLQRCM on 13 December 2023, accompanied by UM Rector Yonghua Song. They were warmly received by Xin Chen, director of ICMS and director of SKLQRCM and Shaoping Li, deputy director of SKLQRCM and director of Macao Centre for Testing of Chinese, University of Macau.

# Delegation of Nanjing Medical University and Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine

Zhibin Hu, president of Nanjing Medical University (NMU) led a delegation and Wenfeng Chen, Secretary of the Party Committee of Guangzhou University of Chinese Medicine (GZUCM) led a delegation visited ICMS on 13 December 2023. They were warmly received by ICMS director Xin Chen and a team of principal investigators. Xin Chen, director of UM's ICMS, and Feng Han, dean of NMU's School of Pharmacy, signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on educational and scientific cooperation.



# Academic visits to ICMS

#### **Delegation of Zhejiang University**

A group of 20 teachers and students from Zhejiang University, including Prof. Xiangnan Zhang, Vice Dean of the School of Pharmacy, Prof. Sunliang Cui, Dean's Assistant and Director of the Institute of Drug Discovery and Design, Ms. Yingying Zhang, Director of the Party and Government Office of the School of Pharmacy, Ms. Lijuan Shen, Director of Undergraduate Teaching of the School of Pharmacy, visited ICMS on 25 November 2023.

Prof. Jiahong Lu, ICMS Deputy Director, Prof. Jinjian Lu, Assistant Director of Ph.D. Education Development, Prof. Bian Ying, Assistant Director of Medicinal Administration Education Development, Prof. Ligen Lin, Assistant Director of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Prof. Carolina Ung, Deputy Director of Center for Pharmaceutical Regulatory Sciences, University of Macau warmly welcomed the delegation.





#### **Delegation of Constructor University**

Prof. Werner Nau, Interim Provost, Vice-President, and Head of Academic Operations, and Dr. Maja Feldt, Managing Director for University Programs and Processes, visited ICMS on 9 November 2023. They were warmly received by ICMS Director Xin Chen and a team of principal investigators.

#### Delegation of Western Sydney University's National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM)

Prof. Dennis Chang, Director of NICM Health Research Institute and Professor of Pharmacology Research at Western Sydney University, and Dr. Phoebe Zhou, International Engagement Coordinator of the NICM Health Research Institute, visited ICMS on 30 October 2023. They were warmly received by ICMS Director Xin Chen and a team of principal investigators.





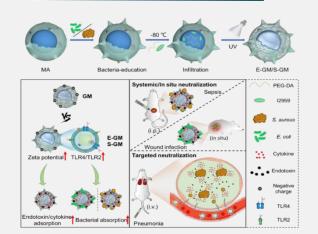
#### **Delegation of Saint Louis University**

Dr. Winston Chan, Saint Louis University trustee and chair of academic committee, and Mrs. Sheila Manion, Vice President for Development at Saint Louis University, visited ICMS on 27 October 2023. They were warmly received by ICMS director, Prof. Xin Chen and Dr. Wai San Cheang.

ICMS research highlights

# A bacterially engineered macrophage sponge as a neutralization decoy to treat bacterial infection

Prof. Ruibing Wang and his team from ICMS have recently published their latest research in Matter, published by Cell Press. The research team constructed intracellularly gelated macrophages (GMs) with an intact membrane structure to neutralize bacteria and endotoxins via receptor-ligand interaction. Furthermore, GMs derived from bacterially engineered macrophages had strengthened bacterium and endotoxin recognition and increased the membrane zeta potential to reduce the electrostatic repulsion force for facile GM-bacterium surface interaction. Bacterially engineered GMs achieved efficient management of sepsis and wound infection and targeted alleviation of bacterial pneumonia. The top-down fabrication of GMs provides a universal neutralization strategy against bacterial infection, and bacterially engineered host immune cells, upon intracellular gelation, demonstrate a natural cell engineering venue to obtain strengthened neutralization decoys.

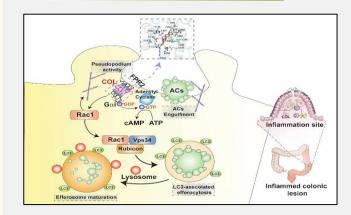


A schematic diagram showing a bacterially engineered macrophage sponge as a neutralization decoy to treat bacterial infection.

Matter, 2023, 6:3889-3911

# Enhancement of efferocytosis through biased FPR2 signaling attenuates intestinal inflammation

Prof. Jiahong Lu in collaboration with Prof. Richard Dequan Ye from the School medicine at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), has made important breakthrough in the field of traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) small molecule for the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). The study successfully identified a natural small molecule from TCM that activates the efferocytosis activity of macrophages. This small molecule selectively activates the formyl peptide receptor-2 (FPR2) on the surface of macrophages, enhances efferocytosis activity through non-classical autophagy, and promotes tissue repair in a mouse model of IBD. The research provides new insights and strategies for the treatment of IBD and reveals the unique pharmacological mechanisms of anti-inflammatory Chinese medicine. The relevant research findings have recently been published in EMBO Molecular Medicine.



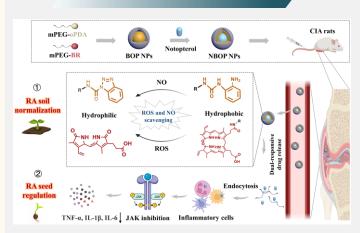
A schematic diagram showing Columbamine effectively enhances the efferocytic activity of macrophages and exhibits significant anti-IBD effects through biased FPR2 signaling.

#### EMBO Molecular Medicine, 2023, 15(12):e17815

### **ICMS research highlights**

### Novel strategy of regulating "soil and seed" for rheumatoid arthritis therapy

Prof. Meiwan Chen and her team from ICMS have proposed a strategy of regulating rheumatoid arthritisrelated soil (depleting reactive oxygen species, ROS and nitric oxide, NO) and seed (inhibiting JAK-STAT pathway of inflammatory cells) for effective rheumatoid arthritis (RA) therapy. Dually ROS and NO responsive nanoparticles were fabricated in this study by taking advantage of the efficient ROS depletion capacity of endogenous compound bilirubin (BR) and NOscavenging compound molecule o-phenylenediamine (oPDA) to further encapsulate JAK inhibitor notopterol (Not). The simultaneous ROS and NO depletion combined with JAK-STAT pathway inhibition could not only promote M2 macrophage polarization to reduce further ROS and NO generation, but also decrease cytokines and chemokines to prevent immune cell recruitment, offering a reference to adjust RA soils and seeds for enhanced RA therapy. The relevant research has recently been published in Acta Pharmaceutica Sinica B.

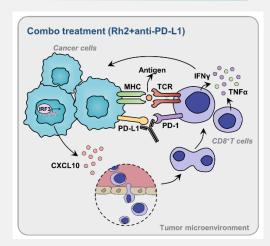


A schematic diagram showing the therapeutic mechanism based on regulating RA soil and seed for alleviating rheumatoid arthritis.

#### Acta Pharmaceutica Sinica B, 2023, 13: 5016-5029

# Ginsenoside Rh2 augmented anti-PD-L1 immunotherapy by reinvigorating CD8+ T cells via increasing intratumoral CXCL10

Prof. Jin-Jian Lu and his research team in collaboration with Prof. Mingging Huang's team from Fujian University of Traditional Chinese Medicine recently published their latest study of Chinese medicine ginseng-derived ginsenoside Rh2 (Rh2) enhancing the anti-tumor effect of anti-PD-L1 antibody on the journal of Pharmacological Research. Immune checkpoint blockade towards PD-1/PD-L1 axis has emerged as a revolutionary cancer therapy approach. However, the clinical response rate is only ~20%. They identified a novel combination strategy that Rh2 markedly improved the anti-cancer efficacy of anti-PD-L1 antibodv bv further triggering the infiltration. proliferation and activation of CD8+ T cells in the tumor microenvironment. Mechanistically, combo treatment further increased the expression of CXCL10 through activating TBK1-IRF3 signaling pathway, explaining the increased infiltration of T cells. These findings shed a new light on the combination strategy to enhance anti-PD-L1 immunotherapy by using natural product Rh2.



A schematic diagram showing ginsenoside Rh2 in combination with anti-PD-L1 antibody increased the CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells infiltration and activation via promoting CXCL10 secretion in the tumor microenvironment.

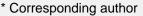
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# Co-first author





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#### ICMS NEWSLETTER/ ISSUE 01

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#### December 2023

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