

Dr Poh Weijie

Duke-NUS Medical School

European labs visited:

BioEurope (conference) Hamburg, Germany &
Wellcome Trust and Coalition for Epidemic
Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), London, UK



Poh Weijie, PhD is driven by a passion to advance scientific discoveries into medicine to tackle healthcare challenges. Since returning back to Singapore in 2018, he has been working with the Centre for Technology and Development (CTeD) at Duke-NUS Medical School to commercialize breakthrough innovations. Dr. Poh's research experience spans the globe, having received his undergraduate degree from the National University of Singapore, followed by a PhD degree from the Johns Hopkins University, and finally completed postdoctoral training at the Dana-Farber Cancer Research Institute in Boston. During this time, Dr. Poh co-founded PathoVax and served as the Chief Executive Officer to commercialize the world's first universal human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for the prevention of infection-related cancers. Spun out from Johns Hopkins, PathoVax is funded by angel investors and US federal agencies to develop its HPV vaccine candidate to human trials in 2020.



Can you describe your experience competing in the Falling Walls Lab Finals in Berlin? What impressed you most?

The Falling Walls Lab Finals was one of the most well-run events that I experienced, which facilitated the opportunity to hear and be inspired by the delegates from all over the world, which each brought very unique perspectives to the stage.

You also took part in the Falling Walls International forum in Berlin. Can you describe this event for us? What were the highlights for you?

The forum was held the day after the Falling Walls Lab Finals, and in a way shows us that it is possible to deliver impact and benefit to society as long as we each continue working on the initiatives that we presented on the first day. The speakers are not only accomplished in their

respective fields but are able to articulate their work and mission with great passion.

What was the most rewarding aspect about your participation in the Falling Walls events?

The exposure to a very diverse global network of like-minded individuals, each setting out to address a major problem. No other event provides the platform to speak with other delegates and be amazed by their conviction.

As EURAXESS Prize winner you also visited research labs in Europe. Can you tell us where you went and who you met?



I went to BioEurope in Hamburg, which is a major partnering conference with pharma, venture capitalists (VCs) and biotech vendors. In the two days, I had one-on-one meetings with the business development directors of vaccine pharma and VCs who are interested to hear more about our accelerated vaccine candidate generation platform. Next, I went to London where I met with representatives from the Wellcome Trust and Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) that are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that advocate for rapid development of vaccines for the world. Having the opportunity to share about our technology in face-to-face meetings is crucial in fostering close relationships,

and I look forward to working with these groups in the very near future.

Why did you pick this lab and what are your key takeaways from the visits?

Being in Singapore, it is challenging to reach out to NGOs and funders in the US and Europe that are leading the global effort in vaccine development. The EURAXESS Prize provided a valuable opportunity to meet and share with these groups that would have been challenging even with a video conference setting. The meetings not only allowed us to gather instant feedback on our technology, but also facilitated the directors in addressing doubts that they have about our work.

What is next for you with regards to your career as a researcher?

I hope to secure international partnerships to advance our accelerated vaccine platform technology and bring on equity financing for us to spin-off a start-up in the very near future.