

# S'porean scientist bags Unesco-L'Oreal prize

BY PAMELA CHOW

**A** SCIENTIST here is working on a treatment method that will kill only **cancerous** cells in the nose, without affecting the healthy cells surrounding them.

For over a year, the National Cancer Centre Singapore's Dr Marissa Teo has been researching how to treat patients with nasopharyngeal carcinoma, a type of nose cancer, by combining **chemotherapy** with cell therapy.

If she is successful, the method could spare patients from complications resulting from radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments, such as hearing loss, jaw-muscle deadlock and tooth decay. It could also reduce the incidence of **relapse**.

The cancer recurs in about 70 per cent of patients, as some cancerous cells still survive.

## HELPDESK 我的字典

**Cancerous:**  
癌变的 ái biàn de

**Chemotherapy:** 化疗 huà liáo

**Relapse:** 旧病复发  
jiù bìng fù fā

**Pursuits:** 探求 tàn qiú

research grant with Baylor College of Medicine in the United States.

She is among this year's 15 winners, who were picked from 150 nominees.

The annual award supports the scientific **pursuits** of three female scientists from each of the world's five continents for their contributions to life sciences. To date, 864 women from 93 countries have received it.

Nasopharyngeal carcinoma is prevalent in southern China and South-east Asia. In Singapore, about 300 people are diagnosed with it each year, and it is the sixth-most-common type of cancer here.

Dr Teo said: "There is an ever-increasing need for research into the forms that are more common here...which is why this award is so important, as it allows me to advance my research in this area."

Professor Leo Tan, who chairs the Singapore National Commission for Unesco's science sub-commission, said that the award is a "real testament (to) and recognition" of Dr Teo's work.

He said: "This award also affirms, in a way, Singapore's efforts at providing the best possible environment for the cultivation of scientists and for good scientific research to flourish here."

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**PIONEER:** Dr Marissa Teo of the National Cancer Centre Singapore.