



LOOKING TO NATURE FOR POWERFUL CURES

Five early-career women chemists from developing countries have been honoured with the Elsevier Foundation Award for Early Career Women Scientists.

An award for early-career women scientists in the developing world honoured five fast-rising chemists. The Elsevier Foundation Awards for Early Career Women Scientists in the Developing World celebrated their research, which looks to nature for ways to address cancer, malaria and other medical problems.

The winning researchers, representing five regions of the developing world, are from Indonesia, Jamaica, Nigeria, Uzbekistan and Yemen. The prizes are awarded annually by The Elsevier Foundation, the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World [OWSD] and TWAS with a goal of building scientific strength and advancing scientific knowledge in developing countries. The winners received their awards on 15 February 2014 during a ceremony at the American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS] Annual Meeting in Chicago.

The winners are:

- **Central & South Asia:** *Nilufar Mamadalieva, Institute of the Chemistry of Plant Substances, Tashkent, Uzbekistan* [biochemistry]. For her work on the phytochemical and biological investigation of active compounds derived from medicinal plants growing in Central Asia, in particular the development of efficient nutraceuticals and the discovery of new lead compounds for the pharmaceutical industry.
- **East and South-East Asia & the Pacific:** *Ritmaleni, Faculty of Pharmacy, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia* [medicinal chemistry]. For her work in the field of organic

synthesis, focusing on the development of tropical medicines, in particular improved methods for the synthesis of sulfoxides and their application in the preparation of biologically active targets.

- **Latin America & the Caribbean:** *Simone Ann Marie Badal McCreath, Natural Products Institute, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, West Indies* [biochemistry]. For her work in designing a new cell culture lab to investigate the cancer-fighting properties of Jamaican natural compounds.

To learn more, visit:
<http://bit.ly/1km9nr4>

More information on each candidate's achievements can be found at
<http://bit.ly/1oCuscF>



▼ The 2014 winners of the Elsevier Foundation Awards for Early Career Women Scientists in the Developing World accept their prizes at the annual AAAS meeting in Chicago. From left are Eqbal Mohammed Abdu Dauqan from Yemen; Simone Ann Marie Badal McCreath from Jamaica; Taiwo Olayemi Elufioye from Nigeria; Ritmaleni from Indonesia; and Nilufar Mamadalieva from Uzbekistan. [Photo credit: Alison Bert]

• **Arab region:** *Eqbal Mohammed Abdu Dauqan, Department of Medical Laboratories Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Al-Saeed University, Taizz, Yemen* (biochemistry). For her research on the antioxidant properties of vegetable oils and specialized research in sensory evaluation and organic chemistry.

• **Sub-Saharan Africa:** *Taiwo Olayemi Elufioye, Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria* (hamacology). For her research on the medicinal properties of native Nigerian plants, in particular the effectiveness of different species in treating malaria, wounds, memory loss, leprosy and cancer.

This year's competition focused on chemistry. A panel of distinguished chemists independently selected each winner based on her achievements, finding that the best candidates all had impressive accomplishments in applying the chemistry of nature to pharmaceutical science. The Elsevier Foundation prize included USD5,000 and all-expenses paid attendance at the 2014 AAAS Annual Meeting in Chicago. In 2015, the prize will be for physics and mathematics.

"These five women, like all women undertaking scientific research in developing countries, will certainly have faced challenges on the road to this award," said Fang Xin, president of OWSD. "But their determination, commitment and enthusiasm have paid off. The award is recognition that they are excellent scientists and that their research has made an impact both regionally and internationally. They are an inspiration to all young women considering careers in science."

"The winners of the 2014 Elsevier Foundation prizes are impressive not just for their research, but also for their potential," said TWAS Executive Director Romain Murenzi. "Certainly these awards could bring them exciting new opportunities for research. We also believe that, over time, these researchers also will fulfill their potential as teachers and mentors, as partners in international projects and as advisers to governments. Such leadership can make a long-lasting contribution to global science."

David Ruth, Executive Director of the Elsevier

Foundation, said: "Professional visibility is crucial to developing high-profile international scientific careers, especially for women. The Elsevier Foundation provides support to early-career women scholars through our New Scholars grant programmes and mentoring, research retreats, professional visibility, childcare, work-life integration and recognition programmes. The awards for these impressive women scientists represent a cooperative effort supported by Elsevier, OWSD, AAAS and TWAS to build research capacity and advance scientific knowledge throughout the developing world – and what better place than the annual AAAS conference to raise awareness among scientists, policymakers, journalists and the public about the need to retain and celebrate women scientists."

In interviews, the winners said the awards could have a significant impact for their own careers, and for the regions they work in.

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McCreath said she was "overwhelmed and truly humbled to be receiving such a prestigious award. It will no doubt inspire my students, mentees and the community of Jamaican women." She added: "Such an award is also vital towards increasing awareness and consequently interest among the private sector and governmental communities and will encourage the development of an anticancer research facility of excellence in Jamaica and, by extension, in the Caribbean."

Dauqan stressed the impact the award would have on women from her region. "The prize is very encouraging for Arab women and is the result of efforts to enhance scientific research in the Arab world", she said.

Ritmaleni, from Indonesia, put it simply: "Women need science, science needs women – and they need to work together." ▀

