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MEDIA RELEASE

Second Gold for IBN at the Singapore HEALTH Awards 2010

Institute wins Gold Award two years in a row for promoting healthy lifestyle at the workplace



*IBN's Gold Singapore
HEALTH Award 2010*

Singapore, November 26, 2010 – Today, the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN) became the first A*STAR research institute to win the Singapore HEALTH Gold Award for the second consecutive year. Launched by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) in 2001, this biennial national award recognizes organizations with commendable Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programs that are in line with HPB's goal of advocating a healthy lifestyle to counter the risks and suffering associated with illnesses and chronic diseases.

IBN has clinched the Gold Award twice since it participated in this competition two years ago, and this year, it recorded a significant increase in its total score compared with 2008. In particular, the Institute attained full marks for its 'Program Components,' with a range of initiatives and policies to enhance employees' lifestyles and personal health, contribute towards overall employee development and provide a supportive working environment.

Spearheaded by IBN Director, Ms Noreena AbuBakar, IBN's WHP Committee, which is responsible for the Institute's WHP programs and initiatives, comprises the Welfare Committee and the Safety Committee.

A particular focus of IBN's strategic WHP initiatives is education to raise awareness among staff about mental health, stress management and lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. In addition to organizing regular health talks, IBN also sponsored several staff members to participate in a Mental First Aid Course to equip them with the basic skills required to help someone with a mental health crisis.

Ms Noreena AbuBakar shares, "While we are pleased to receive this Gold Award, we are even more delighted that our staff have benefited from our programs over the past two years. In particular, the prevalence of high blood cholesterol and absenteeism due to illness among our staff have declined during this period. Employee welfare is one of our top priorities at IBN, and reducing the detrimental effects of stress has been at the forefront of our WHP policy. This award serves to motivate us and we pledge to continue

to establish a holistic workplace health and wellness program for all our staff and students.”

IBN also scored well in terms of ‘Program Positioning and Organization,’ which reflects the strong leadership and management support for its WHP initiatives. IBN’s Flexible Benefits scheme allows employees to be reimbursed for comprehensive health screening packages, including cholesterol checks, as well as gym membership fees. The Institute even sets aside a dedicated yearly budget for health-related activities such as monthly fruit distribution, flu vaccinations, and health screenings.

In addition, IBN’s strong pro-family policy encourages and helps staff in their efforts to achieve a healthy work-life balance. The Institute not only supports national campaigns such as the HPB’s Eat with Your Family Day that enables staff to spend quality time with their family members and loved ones, but also organizes its own family-based activities such as the ‘Bring Your Child To Work Day,’ where employees’ children may accompany their parents to the workplace to experience the IBN work environment.

According to Ms Amanda Wong, Head of Human Resources and Chair of the Welfare Committee, “We have open channels of communication and conduct independent surveys to gather information about the challenges faced by our staff in order to provide them with the necessary support and help. Earlier this year, we rolled out an Employee Assistance Program to help staff and their immediate family members to enhance their emotional well-being, and handle adolescent and other family issues. This program also includes financial and legal consultation.”

In conjunction with HPB’s Youth Advolution for Health Program, IBN also organized several activities for its Youth Research Program and long-term PhD students. One such activity was the Emotion Management Workshop, which covered issues such as anger management and anxiety control, as well as examination coping skills.

Professor Jackie Y. Ying, Executive Director, adds, “Due to the nature of scientific research, it is imperative that we maintain a safe working environment and prevent accidents from occurring. Our employees must comply with the Environment Health Safety requirements and undergo safety training in order to be able to work in the labs. We also conduct regular first aid training courses and emergency drills to equip staff with the necessary skills for coping with workplace accidents and crises. The IBN Safety Committee contributes to this effort by continually improving our safety practices and raising awareness about safety issues and the importance of accident prevention.”

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About the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology

The Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (IBN) was established in 2003 and is spearheaded by its Executive Director, Professor Jackie Yi-Ru Ying, who has been on the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Chemical Engineering faculty since 1992, and was among the youngest to be promoted to Professor in 2001.

In 2008, Professor Ying was recognized as one of "One Hundred Engineers of the Modern Era" by the American Institute of Chemical Engineers for her groundbreaking work on nanostructured systems, nanoporous materials and host matrices for quantum dots and wires.

Under her direction, IBN conducts research at the cutting-edge of bioengineering and nanotechnology. Its programs are geared towards linking multiple disciplines across all fields in engineering, science and medicine to produce research breakthroughs that will improve healthcare and our quality of life.

IBN's research activities are focused in the following areas:

- Drug and Gene Delivery, where the controlled release of therapeutics involve the use of functionalized polymers, hydrogels and biologics for targeting diseased cells and organs, and for responding to specific biological stimuli.
- Cell and Tissue Engineering, where biomimicking materials, stem cell technology, microfluidic systems and bioimaging tools are combined to develop novel approaches to regenerative medicine and artificial organs.
- Biosensors and Biodevices, which involve nanotechnology and microfabricated platforms for high-throughput biomarker and drug screening, automated biologics synthesis, and rapid disease diagnosis
- Pharmaceuticals Synthesis and Green Chemistry, which encompass the efficient catalytic synthesis of chiral pharmaceuticals, and new nanocomposite materials for sustainable technology and alternative energy generation.

IBN's innovative research is aimed at creating new knowledge and intellectual properties in the emerging fields of bioengineering and nanotechnology to attract top-notch researchers and business partners to Singapore. Since 2003, IBN researchers have published over 619 papers in leading journals.

IBN also plays an active role in technology transfer and spinning off companies, linking the research institute and industrial partners to other global institutions. The Institute has filed over 1,099 patent applications on its inventions and is currently looking for partners for collaboration and commercialization of its portfolio of technologies.

IBN's current staff strength stands at over 180 scientists, engineers and medical doctors. With its multinational and multidisciplinary research staff, the institute is geared towards generating new biomaterials, devices, systems, equipment and processes to boost Singapore's economy in the fast-growing biomedical sector.

IBN is also committed to nurturing young minds, and the institute acts as a training ground for PhD students and undergraduates. In October 2003, IBN initiated a Youth Research Program to open its doors to university students, as well as students and teachers from various secondary schools and junior colleges. It has since reached out to more than 41,959 students and teachers from 235 local and overseas schools and institutions.

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