

## A\*STAR holds first medical technology convention

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SINGAPORE: Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A\*STAR) held its first medical technology convention this week, amid growing emphasis on the sector.

The convention involves hundreds of clinicians, scientists and business leaders.

The global medical technology (medtech) industry is expected to reach more than US\$300 billion in 2017, with Asia Pacific playing a leading role.

It is projected to grow more than 10 per cent in the same period, according to the global market research firm Lucintel.

In Singapore, the medical technology sector saw its manufacturing output grow 14.2 per cent in the first seven months of this year, according to the Economic Development Board.

To tap this rapidly expanding sector, A\*STAR partnered the European Central Bank to set up the year-long Singapore-Stanford Biodesign (SSB) programme.

Four fellows spent six months at the Stanford University in California, learning the Biodesign Process.

They also spent another six months in Singapore to share what they have learnt.

The Biodesign Process is a design-thinking approach to identify clinical needs, invent new medical technologies and implement innovations into sustainable businesses.

Programme director of A\*STAR's Healthcare and Lifestyle Programme, Tan Sze Wee, said: "We realised Asian (medical technology) innovators are still relatively new in our ecosystem. And therefore, we need to gather the experience from the Stanford programme, then customise it to our local context."

Twelve fellows have gone through the programme since it started in 2010. The innovation class they teach has seen more than 80 students from the public sector.

Launched in 2011, the innovation class enrolls post-graduates with engineering, medical and/or business background, from the National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, Duke-NUS and Singapore Management University.

In July, the classes were also open to privately-owned businesses.

A\*STAR said the 2013 class has been oversubscribed, with more than twice the number of applications to seats available.

Associate Professor Tan said: "That whole cluster had generated over S\$4 billion in terms of output. Compared to 10 years ago, I think the cluster had grown by over 2.5 times."

Medical technology company Hill-Rom is one of four new corporate sponsors for the programme.

Biosensors Interventional Technologies Pte Ltd, Becton Dickinson and Company, as well as Medtronic International Ltd are also a part of the corporate sponsor group.

Hill-Rom had to pay an undisclosed amount of money to gain access to the classes.

However, the firm's Asia Pacific R&D executive director Alvin Tan said he thought this would give Hill-Rom a leg up in an increasingly competitive industry.

"It gives us access to some of the best talent in the medtech industry, as well as a forum for networking and collaboration among talent," Mr Tan said.

"To be successful, you need a good mix of experienced individuals with the right medtech knowledge."