

Birmingham medical professor becomes honorary citizen of Chinese city

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The government of Guangzhou, one of the most important cities in mainland China, has named University of Birmingham Professor KK Cheng as an honorary citizen.

The prestigious honour was bestowed by Mr Wan Qingliang, Party Secretary of the CPC Guangzhou and Mr Chen Jianhua, Mayor of Guangzhou at an official ceremony in the city last week.

Professor Cheng has a longstanding and active relationship with Guangzhou and has led the University's academic interests in its most significant engagement in China to date - The University of Birmingham Guangzhou Centre, a landmark partnership between the University and the Guangzhou Municipal Government.

For over 10 years, Professor Cheng has been at the forefront of a pioneering public health project in Guangzhou. The Guangzhou Biobank Cohort Study (GBCS) is a collaborative research project between the Guangzhou Number 12 People's Hospital and the Universities of Birmingham and Hong Kong, which is following up 30,000 men and women over 50 in Guangzhou.

This project is recognised internationally as an important platform that supports research on the role of genetic, lifestyle, occupational, environmental and life course factors in common chronic diseases.

Since 2006, the study has produced over 80 papers and has made important contributions to policy making in China and beyond. The main long-term aim of the study is to examine the effects of genetic and environmental influences on health and chronic disease development (particularly circulatory disease, chronic respiratory disease, cancer and dementia). In addition to being a fruitful scientific study, it has provided a strong launch pad for the University's development in Guangzhou.

Professor Cheng, said: "I am greatly honoured and extremely grateful to the Guangzhou Municipal Government for this award. A recognition of our collective effort as well as my personal contribution, the honour gives the University of Birmingham an additional impetus in its exciting pursuits in Guangzhou."

"I am very pleased to see the University's development in Guangzhou flourishing. While medical research projects remain a strong focus, our work there now involves all five Colleges of the University and includes education and training as well as research. We probably have a bigger presence in Guangzhou than any other western university but, in many ways, I see our activities there as only the beginning of a long and happy collaboration."

A Professor of Public Health and Primary Care in the College of Medical and Dental Sciences, KK Cheng has been at the University of Birmingham since 1993. As the lead member on health on the British Government's China Task Force, Professor Cheng developed an important collaboration between the UK and China in primary care. He founded the Department of General Practice at Peking University Health Science Center in May 2011 and is its Honorary Head and Professor. Professor Cheng is also Honorary Consultant in Public Health Medicine at Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust and holds an Honorary Chair at the University of Hong Kong.

Notes to Editors

For further information about the University of Birmingham's engagement in Guangzhou, visit: www.birmingham.ac.uk/guangzhou (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/guangzhou>)

View Professor KK Cheng's University of Birmingham video profile at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGbWwR3Erds> (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGbWwR3Erds>)

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