

Local medical teaching site a global hit

Free online resource on pathology by NUS prof popular with students worldwide

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Argentina. Belarus. Egypt. Saudi Arabia. Medical students and faculty from these countries and more are flocking to Pathweb – an online pathology teaching resource created by an associate professor from the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Pathweb is a combination of a virtual pathology museum that holds digitised, annotated specimens of diseased organs, and a teaching blog-site with videos and mind maps for students' self-study.

Launched in August last year, Pathweb gives medical students – even those outside NUS – free access to these resources.

Existing pathology websites are mostly composed of annotated pictures and do not feature digitised specimens.

Since its launch, Pathweb has received more than 32,000 visitors and 296,000 views.

NUS medical students used to rely on physical specimens that were passed around in class.

During examination periods, students are allowed to borrow the specimens for self-study, but are not allowed to take them out of the classroom.

Associate Professor Nga Min En, who is behind the digitisation project, said her motivation stemmed partly from her experience as a medical student at NUS.

Recalling her own encounters with the physical specimens, she told *The Straits Times*: "Medical students deal with massive information overloads. I used to memorise a lot, and I remember very clearly what it was like to be a student.

"When we were in class, the (physical) containers would be passed around the lecture room, but by the time I got my hands on them, the teacher would already have moved on to another topic.

"Now, I'm in a position to package information for my students in a logical way to lessen their pain and help them understand better."

Prof Nga, 43, is also a consulting pathologist at the National University Hospital. She has spent about six years on this online resource, and it has not been completed yet.

To date, about 250 specimens have been digitised and annotated, and another 800 are in the works.

The digitisation process involves taking 24 photos from multiple angles, to be edited with Adobe Photoshop software and combined into a single file to get a 360-degree view of the specimen.

NUS has forked out about \$375,000 in grants to fund the project thus far, and students have given positive reviews of Pathweb, said Prof Nga.

Fourth-year NUS medicine student Teo Jun Hao said: "The website was really helpful in providing me with a more holistic picture of what I was learning in pathology."

Said Prof Nga, whose husband is also a pathologist at Singapore General Hospital: "I hope to collaborate with postgraduates and hospitals in the future... I hope the user base will expand.

"This was meant to go beyond NUS. I'm happy to share it (for free) – it's about the spirit of teaching and doing what you can to make a difference."

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• Pathweb can be accessed here: <https://pathweb.nus.edu.sg/>. Access is free, but non-NUS students will have to register an account first.

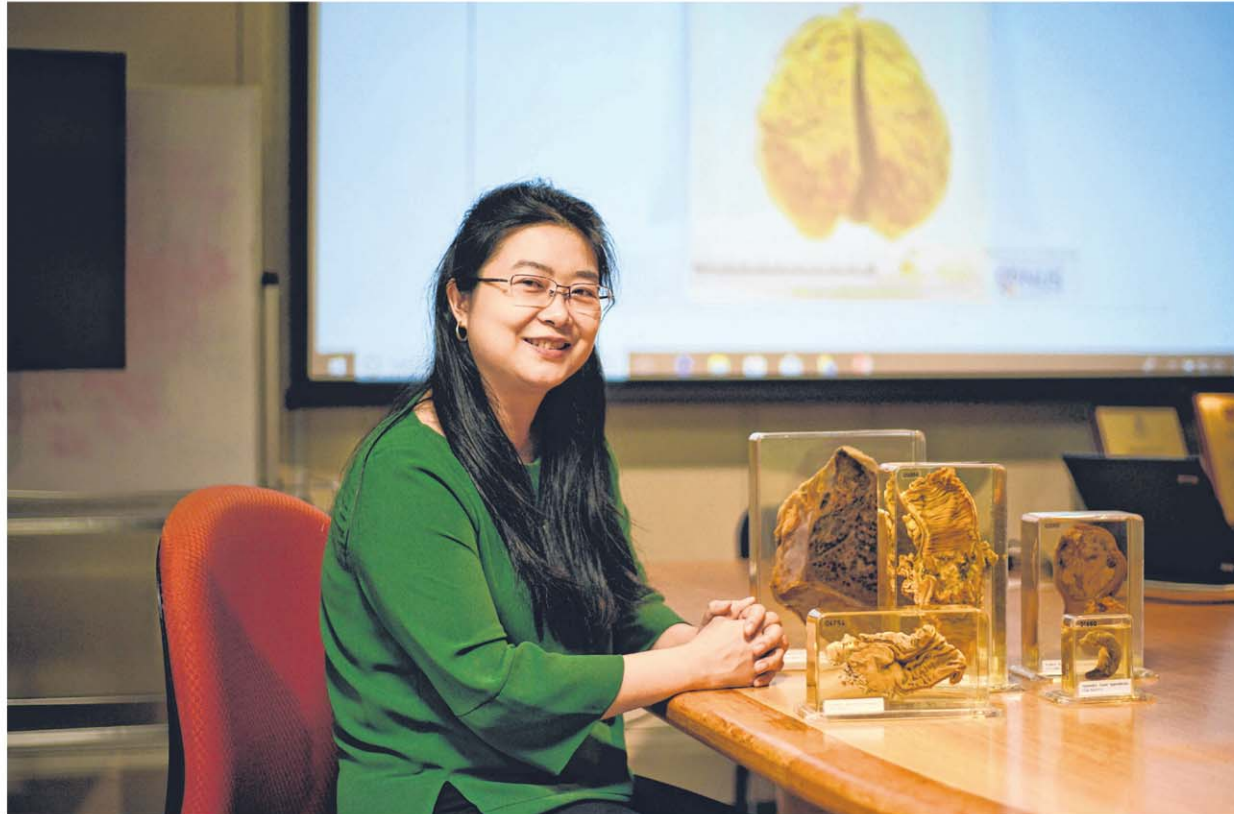
ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

32k

Number of visitors Pathweb has received since its launch in August last year.

296k

Number of views.



For the past six years, Associate Professor Nga Min En from NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine has been digitising physical specimens of diseased body parts (displayed next to her) and uploading them as part of an online teaching resource called Pathweb.
ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR