VIT scholar bags Young Scientist award

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Prasanth Manohar from Tamil Nadu has emerged as a winner of Young Scientist of The Year 2016 for his research on Phage Therapy for Multi Drug Resistance clinical pathogens.

Adding another feather to its cap, VIT University student Prasanth Manohar bagged the prestigious Young Scientist of The Year 2016.

This revered title is a part of the young scientist competition of the year initiative of the FP7 projects: INNO INDIGO and INDIGO POLICY. It was initiated in 2014 with the aim of giving young researchers from India and Europe a suitable podium to promote their research projects and ideas for cooperation (between India and Europe).

Through such a competition, young scientists gain enormous exposure not only from their peers on social media platforms but also from the scientific community as the final decision on the winner is taken by the audience of EU-India STI Days which gathers annually since 2009 to promote scientific cooperation between the two scientific hubs, after presentations of projects and project ideas by the finalists.

Clearing various stages of the competitive process, Manohar prepared a video for the final stage explaining his research.

Talking about his research work, which he showcased at the competition, Manohar explains, "My research topic is Phage Therapy for Multi Drug Resistance clinical pathogens. I am currently working on identifying the prevalence and dissemination of antibiotic-resistant bacteria among clinical pathogens in India and isolating and characterizing novel lytic phages for therapeutic purpose against multi-drug resistant bacteria. My research focuses on the preparation of freeze-dried preparation of cocktail phages to treat infections caused by these superbugs."

Prasanth Manohar is currently a research scholar at VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu. "My native is Karur, Tamil Nadu, and I completed my MSc Biotechnology from Sri Ramachandra Univerisity, Porur, Chennai," he shares.

The hardworking student acknowledges VIT University's special lab as instrumental in the success of his research. Manohar explains that VIT University and Department of Science and Technology— Science and Engineering Research Board, Govt of India, New Delhi funded to his research guide to establish Antibiotic Resistance Laboratory that belongs to School of Bio Sciences and Technology (SBST).

"Our lab is working under the guidance of Dr N Ramesh, Assistant Professor, Young Scientist-DST-SERB, Joint Coordinator-IIMAR, SBST. Our research work includes the identification of carbapenem, colistin and tigecycline resistant bacteria from clinical samples. Our future aim is to develop our lab into an antibiotic resistant and phage therapy centre. We are currently pursuing our collaborated work with six countries such as Turkey, Australia, USA, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Norway and UK. Other than research activities we have an organization called IIMAR, Indian Initiative for Management of Antibiotic Resistance, and My research guide serving as a joint coordinator in IIMAR. The aim of IIMAR is to create awareness among the public about the developing antibiotic resistance infections and to educate people about the rational use of antibiotics," he said.

Thanking the authorities he says, VIT University and "Department of Science and Technology— Science and Engineering Research Board (DST SERB), Govt of India, New Delhi has specially designed this lab for us and I thank VET University management for providing me an opportunity to do my research here. A special thanks to my research guide Dr N Ramesh for his continuous guidance and support."

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The young scientist competition of the year 2016 was started in May-July 2016 and the competition was open to all India and EU based PhD students and early career researchers, who work in the field of bio-economy, biotechnology and bio-based energy. Based on a selection by a scientific evaluation panel, 6 young scientists were invited to participate in the EU-India STI cooperation days 2016. It includes Christina Avila from Swings project, Spain, Om Prakash Sarkar from CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad, Vikram Soni from IIT-Kanpur, Kalyan Baskar from IIM-Ahmedabad, S. Harikiran Muniganti-IISc- BCII7 Bangalore, Prasanth Manohar-VIT University, Vellore.

From the shortlisted applicants, the INDIGO Facebook fans selected four finalists based on the video presentations Prasanth Manohar from VIT University, Vellore, Om Prakash Sarkar from CSIR-IICT, Hyderabad, Vikram Soni from IIT-Kanpur, and Harikiran Muniganti-IISc-Bangalore, who competed for the title of the young scientist of the year 2016. All four finalists presented their ideas in front of the EU-India STI days audience.

The scientific panel members (four from different countries) interviewed the finalists on stage and all the audience were allowed to vote for their favourite video. Finally, Prasanth Manohar, emerged as a winner of the young scientist competition of the year 2016. He will be awarded a fully covered trip to a scientific conference of his choice in Europe (2000 euro) and an INDIGO project scheme.

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