Canada links up with developing country researchers

Eight leading researchers from around the developing world have linked up with their peers in Canada to embark on research programmes aimed at solving problems their countries face.

Researchers from countries including China, Ghana, Morocco and Uganda will work with their counterparts on problems ranging from wireless communication to coastal pollution.

Each collaboration, worth one million Canadian dollars (around US$813,000), also seeks to mentor students. Three quarters of the funding will be spent in the developing country.

Chinese scientists have won two of the eight awards, known as the International Research Chairs Initiative (IRCI).

One of the groups, led by Shao Yiming at China's National Centre for AIDS/STD Control and Prevention, and Wu Jianhong at York University in Toronto, is going to train and establish the first team to model disease outbreaks in China.

Wu's team will build models to monitor the top three infectious diseases in China — HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and hepatitis.

"By taking advantage of the significantly rich epidemiological database from China's Center for Disease Control and Prevention and local expertise about these data, we will be able to build more realistic models to impact policymaking," says Wu.

The project will also recruit more than 20 Chinese graduates and postdoctoral students who it is hoped will educate the next generation.

The other Chinese scientist is Zhu Xiaoyan, who holds a research chair in information technology at Tsinghua University. Her group, linked with Li Ming of the University of Waterloo in Canada, will work on developing an intelligent search engine.

Unlike Google's keyword-based search engine, it will follow a question and answer model that Li hopes will provide simpler and more accurate answers to queries.

The programme is sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canada Research Chairs Program.

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