

PhD graduate Dr Kevin Jian-Jin Loo has been working to improve radiation therapies for cancer sufferers

By Desirée Savage
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Dr Kevin Jia-Jin Loo received his PhD at the Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences ceremony at the University of Wollongong on Wednesday. His study of an in-body imaging system to improve prostate cancer radiation treatment accuracy and outcomes.

Kevin Jia-Jin Loo is not your average scientist. At age 26 the former Wollongong local received his Doctorate in Physics from the University of Wollongong on Wednesday, to the surprise of many.

“No-one believes me [because of my age] but it’s cool to have the chance to talk to people about science,” he said. “When I say I’m a physicist it’s kind of a good little party trick to have.”

His research into improving prostate cancer treatments took him to Europe’s oldest technical university, the Institute of Experimental and Applied Physics in Prague. Over the past three years his work with the Centre for Medical Radiation Physics focused on radiation detection and developing radiation therapies that did not attack healthy areas of the body around tumours.

“In prostate cancer there’s critical organs you’re trying to avoid, like the urethra and the rectum. So we’re basically avoiding those structures in a better way, so after the treatment patients can have a normal return to life quicker,” he said. “It’s up to us as physicists to plan the treatments in conjunction with the doctors.”

He said Europe was a mecca for science and certainly a place any physicist would want to be, with plenty of opportunity to network with people from different fields. Plus, he said the beer was really cheap, “which is always a plus”.

Dr Loo has also mentored other students and even played host to a group of Bulli High School students who took time out from the HSC earlier this year for a science tour to Switzerland then Prague.

It is unusual to be given a doctorate so young, but Dr Loo conceded he skipped two grades in primary school then finished an accelerated program at Illawarra Christian School before completing his Bachelor of Medical Radiation Physics Advanced Honors in 2009.

After 10 years of study Dr Loo was hoping for some much earned time off soon, though was still busy looking for his next research endeavour. Ultimately he’d love to

work at a cancer centre in New York but said he was happy to just explore what was around.

“I just go with the flow and see what opportunities go my way,” he said.

Only students from the Faculty of Business and Faculty of Engineering and Information Sciences graduate in December this year, as part of an overhaul. Students from other faculties will have to wait until the next round of graduations scheduled for April and May 2016.

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<http://www.illawarramercury.com.au/story/3572361/party-tricks-just-science/>