PHARMALINK: UiTM X UNHAS 2026 (OUTBOUND EXCHANGE)

By: Aliah Nur Sabrina Mohd Khairol Rizal and Nureen Nisya Mohd Razani, on behalf of the UiTM delegation

In September 2026, we joined an eight-day international student exchange programme at Universitas Hasanuddin (UNHAS) in Makassar, Indonesia. Our delegation comprised four students from the Faculty of Pharmacy (FPH), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) — Aliah Nur Sabrina Mohd Khairol Rizal, Nureen Nisya Mohd Razani, Nurul Iman Izzati Anuar and Nur Farhani Fathiah Mohd Faiross and two students from the Dietetics Programme, Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS), UiTM: Nurin Nabilah Mohamad Najib and Sakinah Jaafar. Led by Dr Norkasihan Ibrahim (FPH) and accompanied by Associate Professor Dr Syahrul Bariah (FHS), the visit offered us opportunities to learn beyond geographical borders.

During our laboratory sessions, we gained hands-on experience in animal handling, explored the use of fruit flies (*Bactrocera spp.*) as an alternative research model and learned about cost-effective laboratory practices. We were also introduced to postgraduate research involving microneedle technology. These sessions broadened our understanding of pharmaceutical research and encouraged us to consider how different approaches and resources can support innovation.

Sharing our final-year projects was another highlight of the visit. Nureen, Nurin and Sakinah shared their research to UNHAS students, exchanged perspectives and gained valuable experience in communicating their findings to an international audience. We also showcased the initiatives and organisational frameworks of our respective student bodies, exchanging insights on the campus leadership, governance and extracurricular engagement.

A highlight was our visit to Pusat Kesehatan Masyarakat (PUSKESMAS) Kapasa, where we gained insights into community-based healthcare in Indonesia. We were particularly inspired to learn that the PUSKESMAS director is Apoteker Riko, a pharmacist. As pharmacy students, we felt proud to see a pharmacist leading a primary healthcare facility and contributing to community health.

Observing the discussion between our lecturers and the PUSKESMAS healthcare team was an eye-opening experience. We learned how the local health system addresses iron deficiency among adolescents and young adults, tackles barriers to HIV treatment adherence among sex workers and transgender people, and combats malnutrition among young children. These dialogues underscored the everyday understanding of the challenges faced by healthcare providers and the importance of care that responds to each community's needs.









Beyond academics, we fully immersed ourselves in the vibrant campus life at UNHAS during its 70th anniversary celebrations. We joined faculty members and students across diverse disciplines for the anniversary ceremony, gala night, and commemorative fun walk. Our exploration extended beyond the campus through a guided city tour of Makassar, complemented by excursions to Rammang-Rammang and Leang-Leang, where we marveled at the region's striking natural landscapes and renowned prehistoric heritage.

The programme concluded with the HEROES International Community Service initiative. Together with UNHAS students and academic staff, we engaged with the public to raise awareness of chronic kidney disease and promote, mitigate and manage its risk factors. This experience allowed us to apply our knowledge beyond the classroom and practise communicating health information effectively to the community.

Throughout the visit, we taught our UNHAS friends Malaysia's Tarian Sumazau, while they taught us Makassar's Tari Paduppa. We performed both dances together at the closing ceremony, celebrating the friendship and cultural understanding we had developed. Learning and practising together brought us closer and, to our surprise, revealed talents we never knew we had!

For us, PharmaLink was a valuable opportunity to broaden our academic perspectives, strengthen our communication and leadership skills, and gain valuable experience in collaborative teamwork. Above all, we returned home with meaningful friendships and a deeper appreciation of the close ties between Malaysia and Indonesia.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Faculty of Pharmacy, UiTM, for supporting this initiative, and we hope such enriching opportunities will continue to benefit future students. Our heartfelt thanks also go to our UNHAS friends and the management of the Faculty of Pharmacy, UNHAS, for their exceptional hospitality, warmth and generosity, which made our eight-day visit truly memorable.