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Teen's assistance in research brings TechColumbus award

By **KHALILA PERRIN**
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He's just 16, but Alburuj Rahman works shoulder-to-shoulder with professors at Ohio State University.

Together they're on a quest for a healthier way to administer radiation to cancer patients.

That's pretty impressive for a teenager, said his Metro Early College High School teacher, Peter Dewitt. But for Rahman it's less about his smarts and more about helping as many people as possible through his work, he said.

Rahman and his mentor Dr. Jian Z. Wang, director of the Radiation Response Modeling Program at the James Cancer Hospital and Research Institute, worked side by side on a study of cranio-spinal irradiation.

CSI is used to manage several types of malignant tumors that can affect the central nervous system. The aim of the study was to find a way to destroy cancerous cells in fluids with a more uniform and precise delivery of radiation.

That improved delivery also keeps other nearby structures from being damaged by the radiation, which is a challenge with current methods, Wang said.

The new method is particularly geared toward use in young patients.

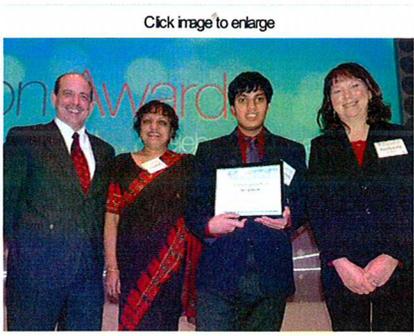
Though Rahman had a steep learning curve, the teen jumped at the chance to do the research, the high school junior said.

"I want to help patients as much as I can," he said.

"I'm really interested in being able to help patients because right now their cells might get damaged because of the overdosage (of radiation). Our method is something that can cause revolutionary change."

Rahman is the son of Lutfur Rahman and Sultana Nahar of the Clintonville area. He and Wang have been working on the project, which Wang initially developed with another physician, since summer 2008.

The study has been successful so far and Rahman said he's hopes to develop the abstract he wrote and recently presented at the 2009 Association of Physicists in Medicine meeting, into a paper for



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Metro Early College High School's Alburuj Rahman (holding award) poses with (from left) Rich Rosen, vice president of education at Battelle, his mother Sultana Nahar, and Diana Wolterman, Battelle's program manager in residence at Metro High School. Nominated by Wolterman, Rahman earlier this month was honored with TechColumbus' 2009 Outstanding High School Student.

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publication.

The life of the research won't end with research and paper writing, though.

"Eventually we want to use this technique in patients," but the method still needs approval from Ohio State University's institutional review board, Wang said.

So far the new radiation delivery method only has been tested via computer software.

Tackling a difficult research project is typical of the teen, said Dewitt.

"As a student he's a great question asker. He has incredible persistence and he likes to understand topics deeply."

Those are essential characteristics in a researcher, he added.

"We can't take any credit for Alburuj. He was like this when we got him," said Diana Wolterman, the Battelle program manager in residence at Metro.

She successfully nominated Rahman for the Outstanding High School Student honor awarded by TechColumbus at its annual Innovation Awards in February. TechColumbus is a nonprofit organization that focuses on technology-based economic development throughout Central Ohio.

Wang praised the teen's work as well.

"He's very dedicated and did not give up when facing so many different difficulties," he said.

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