

If Dickens were to be transported to present day Ireland, we can be sure he would have ample inspiration for his novel 'Hard times'. Despite the arrival of the Queen and the Obamas, as well as the inauguration of our 9th president, Michael D. Higgins, 2011 has certainly been a year of hard times, but for science, at least, there has been something to cheer about; November 12th brought the inaugural Young Life Scientists Ireland (YLSI) symposium to UCD, a place where young researchers from Ireland and abroad came together to showcase their work in a welcoming and relaxed environment, to network with peers and to enhance their careers with a hope of perhaps someday becoming the guest speaker for the next generation of young life scientists – a beacon of hope in these 'hard times'.



YLSI 2011 Committee with keynote speakers.

From L-R: Colm Tobin, Anthony McDermott, Philip Lewis, Cormac McDonnell, Paul Lavin, Keith Siew (Co-chair), Dr. Prem Kumar, Dr. Jennifer Mitchell, Naadiya Carrim (co-chair), Lorna Farrelly, Thea Tilley, Leigh Powell, Hannah McCarthy and Olivia O'Leary

Over a year ago my co-chair, Keith Siew, and I had the intention of organising a symposium for Young Life Scientists UK, but were unsuccessful in our bid. Thankfully Philip Smyth from Systems Biology Ireland came forward and gave us the push we needed to organise the very first YLSI and with the help of our committee (pictured above), several academia and sponsors our efforts came to fruition on Saturday the 12th of November in University College Dublin, where we greeted over 110 delegates from Ireland and abroad. The day consisted of parallel sessions in various themes covering 24 oral communications accompanied by interactive workshops and a keenly contested poster session.

Inspiration and motivation were the main themes running throughout the day, with outstanding talks from our keynote speakers; Dr. Jennifer Mitchell from University College Dublin, a scientist who has conquered so much in such little time, truly set the tone in the morning, inspiring us all to follow in her footsteps with her exceptional work on 'The role of CD36 as a platelet receptor for Gram Positive Pathogens'. Our other guest speaker, Dr. Prem Kumar from University of Birmingham, taught us all to not judge a book (or in this case a journal) by it's cover with an equally inspiring talk on 'Fact and artefact in chemoreceptor physiology: can everyone, or even anyone, be right?'. Dr. Kumar not only reminded us why we started our careers in science but, indeed motivated us to continue research with his passionate and very motivating talk. After the wine reception and poster competition the delegates were treated to a science quiz and finger food in the Grand Central bar, where, it is fair to say, friendships (and possibly collaborative links) were made. The aim of YLSI was to encourage, inspire and motivate young scientists, something which I feel we've succeeded in. The standard of oral communications was excellent leaving us with no fear that the future of life science research is in safe hands with these bright young minds.

Before I finish, I would like to thank all our sponsors, universities, and societies - and of course to all our delegates whom without none of this would have happened.

'Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought'

Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

- Naadiya Carrim, YLSI Co-chair