



Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter

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Welcome to this edition of the Queen's University Belfast Social Charter Newsletter. In this volume: COVID-19 and Flu research; Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI awards £500,000 to Queen's research; the Science Shop; McCosh Lecture 2020; amnesties database launched; Sustainability and Climate Change Lecture Series; Seamus Heaney Centre Fellows 2020-21 and Digital DNA Award to School of Nursing and Midwifery Staff.

Queen's study shows children with gastrointestinal symptoms should be included in COVID-19 testing

Over 1,000 children from Northern Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, known as 'COVID Warriors' have had their antibodies measured in the UK-wide trial called 'Seroprevalence of SARS-Cov-2 infection in healthy children'.

The study, led by Queen's, in partnership with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Northern Ireland aims to assess the number of children who have had COVID-19, the symptomatology of infection and if those children have antibodies that may be able to fight off the infection.

The researchers have found that following the first wave of the pandemic, seven per cent of the children tested positive for antibodies, indicating previous infection with COVID-19. Half of the children with COVID-19 reported no symptoms, and gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms (such as diarrhoea and vomiting) were also more common than cough or changes in the children's sense of smell or taste, which may have implications for the testing criteria used for children.

"Following the first wave of the pandemic in the UK, we have learnt that half of children participating in this study are asymptomatic with SARS-CoV-2 infection, and those with symptoms do not typically have a cough or changes to their smell/taste, with GI upset a far more common symptom. This study has shown that we may want to consider refining the testing criteria for children to include GI symptoms."

Research with Impact:

Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI awards £500,000 grant to Queen's University for blood cancer research

Marking the start of Blood Cancer Awareness Month, the announcement of a new four-year package of funding will continue to support and build the blood cancer research network in Belfast. It will ensure the recruitment of a research fellow and a supporting technician who will be based in the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research (PGJCCR).

This research award is the second largest gift that the charity has donated to Queen's Foundation in the last three years, with the previous package of £790,000 gifted in 2017. This new funding further builds on the first package which included the recruitment of a Lecturer (Dr Lisa Crawford), two PHD students (Deirdre Venney and Paul Strain) and Clinical Research Fellow (Dr Phil Weir).

Leukaemia and Lymphoma NI knows first-hand how destructive a blood cancer diagnosis can be and has invested over £13 million to this life-saving research since its establishment in 1964.

Every month, approximately 100 people are diagnosed with blood cancer in Northern Ireland. One in every four people diagnosed will not survive.

"Receiving a blood cancer diagnosis is a frightening event that changes your life and that of your family forever. This significant gift from our Charity to Queen's University is an investment in hope for the future for all patients like me who are suffering from Leukaemia and other blood cancers. It is reassuring to know that it will be used to support research being carried out in Northern Ireland which will benefit people here and further afield."

Ken Reid, Patron of Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI



Education with Social Purpose: The Science Shop

The Science Shop is a community-engaged research initiative creating connections between students at Queen's University Belfast and community organisations across Northern Ireland.

The Science Shop, a joint collaboration between Queen's University Belfast and the Ulster University, is part of the wider European network of Science Shops. It supports community organisations in developing research projects which are carried out by students at Queen's as part of their degree programme.

The partnerships are based on the principle of collaboration for societal benefit.

Science Shop provides invites students to apply their knowledge, skills, and experience to a research project which will not only benefit a community organisation, but provide them with many transferable skills in preparation for professional employment.

Between 2014-2019 alone, the Science Shop delivered 1,314 community research projects, with 4,894 students and 366 community organisations taking part.

Breaking Boundaries to Produce New Knowledge: Queen's academic awarded share of €677 million to study how flu viruses hijack cells

Dr David Courtney, from Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine is one of 436 laureates from the 2020 ERC Starting Grants competition who have been awarded a share of €677 million to tackle the biggest scientific questions of our time.

Dr Courtney's five-year project will receive a grant of over €1.5 million to establish a research group at Queen's dedicated to studying how influenza (flu) viruses interact with the machinery inside the cells of our body.

Influenza viruses, like all viruses, hijack systems within our cells to replicate themselves and help continue their spread to other vulnerable individuals. Through developing a better understanding of the intricate details of the influenza life cycle, small drug molecules may be designed to disrupt these interactions and halt the virus replication before it can spread.

It is hoped the research project may provide some understanding as to how viruses spread at such a rapid rate and become a pandemic, such as the current coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2.

"By exploring the mechanisms by which influenza viruses' replicate inside our cells we hope to come up with some potential answers to the question 'how do we prevent the next viral pandemic'."

Dr David Courtney, Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine, Queen's University Belfast



Civic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue: McCosh Lecture 2020

The 2020 McCosh Lecture, delivered by Queen's University in partnership with the British Academy and Harvard Divinity School, will be available as a podcast from **5pm on Friday, 18 September 2020**.

Guest speaker Professor David Hempton, Dean of Harvard Divinity School, will discuss 'Networks, Nodes and Nuclei: Towards a New Theory of Religious Change'.

This Lecture, originally the Annual Religious Studies Lecture, is named in honour of James McCosh (1811-1894) who was appointed to the Chair of Logic and Metaphysics at Queen's University in 1850 shortly after the establishment of the University.

For more information, and to access the podcast, click on the image below.



Universities launch database on amnesties granted during conflict and peace processes

Queen's and the University of Edinburgh have launched the first public, open access database which explores amnesties that were granted during ongoing conflicts, or as part of peace negotiations, or in post-conflict periods.

Amnesties are measures that seek to remove criminal liability for wrongdoing. They are often used during armed conflicts or as part of negotiated peace settlements to reduce the violence and contribute to sustainable peace.

The work brings together the research of lead-academic, Professor Louise Mallinder from the School of Law at Queen's University Belfast and the technologies of the University of Edinburgh's Political Settlement Research Programme, to create a new online tool for conflict parties and peacebuilders. The project is funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

The Amnesties, Conflict and Peace Agreement Dataset is available [**HERE**](#)

Equality and Excellence:

Covid-19 Research Collaborations between Queen's and VCSE Sector Organisations

Queen's University researchers, in collaboration with local and international Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector organisations, have recently been successful in obtaining ESRC funding to undertake Covid-19 related research projects.

Successfully funded projects will focus on areas such as the rights of children and young people, mental health and wellbeing and loneliness.

Collaborating VCSE organisations include Northern Ireland Kidney Patients' Association (NIKPA), Northern Ireland Kidney Research Fund and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Volunteer Now, Age NI and Engage With Age.

These productive research collaborations will provide academics and VCSE organisations with the opportunity to undertake mutually beneficial research addressing key issues pertaining to the sector, and have the potential for long term positive impacts on the lives of service users and voluntary organisations.

Sustainability:

Sustainability and Climate Change Lecture Series

If you missed the latest IGFS climate change sustainability webinar, you might be happy to hear it is now available to view on the University's YouTube page.

There are around 25,000 people at Queen's including students and staff so you may well wonder how they keep their carbon footprint down? The University's Environmental Manager Sara Lynch delivers a fantastic talk on the range of activity happening at Queen's.

Click on the image below to learn more!



Recognising and Rewarding Contributions from Staff and Students: Announcing the Seamus Heaney Centre Fellows 2020-21

Each year, the Seamus Heaney Centre announces three Fellows from the worlds of Poetry, Fiction, Music, Film and Television to explore creative writing in all its forms by working with students, and contributing to the Centre's activities within the University and the wider literary community.

This year the fellows are: Oliver Jeffers, Marian Keyes, and Enda Walsh as the next Seamus Heaney Fellows.

Oliver Jeffers is an artist and author working in painting, bookmaking, illustration, collage, performance and sculpture. Marian Keyes is the international bestselling author of fourteen novels including *Watermelon*, *Rachel's Holiday*, *Sushi for Beginners*, *This Charming Man*, and *The Break*. Enda Walsh is a Tony and multi award-winning Irish playwright and director.



Digital DNA Award to School of Nursing and Midwifery Staff

The University is delighted to announce that Mr Matt Birch and Ms Sharon Nurse of Queen's School of Nursing and Midwifery have been awarded the DigitalDNA 'Tech For Good' Innovation Award for their Neonatal Resuscitation project.

