

## Female scientists campaign for change in gender inequality in science

Posted on Thursday 4th July 2013

Two University of Birmingham scientists will be taking their cutting edge research to the streets tomorrow (Friday) as they take part in Soapbox Science and call for a change in gender inequality in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Professor Laura Piddock, Professor of Microbiology, and Dr Zoe Schnepf, Fellow of the School of Chemistry, will be showcasing their particular branches of science and their research to the general public at the free event, on London's Southbank, between 12pm and 3pm.

Soapbox Science is a collaboration between L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science, which is supported by the Royal Society, and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and its mission is simple: to eliminate gender inequality in science by raising the profile, and challenging the public's view, of women and science. The event will hear from 12 scientists, all talking passionately about their area of work.

The University of Birmingham is also committed to gender equality and recently was given the Athena Swan bronze award, recognising good employment practice in the recruitment, retention and progression of female academics in STEM. Athena Swan is a charter which the University joined in March 2011, to address the sector-wide issues of female under-representation in STEM.

Professor Piddock is the British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy Chair in Public Engagement and Director of Antibiotic Action – an organisation which leads the calls for new antibiotic treatments to combat antibiotic resistance.

She said: "It is important that women are recognised for their considerable contributions in all areas of science. Soapbox Science is an excellent way for scientists to engage with the general public and tell them about their research and show that women are actively involved.

"The breadth and depth of science being presented on 5 July challenges stereotypes of scientists and of women. I'm delighted to have been chosen to present my research on antibiotics, antibiotic resistance and tell people why we need new drugs. This is an area of research in which the University of Birmingham leads."

Dr Zoe Schnepf is a Birmingham Fellow and her research focus is the creation of functional nanomaterials from renewable resources. In particular, she is interested in using biomass to produce sustainable catalysts for various applications, such as energy generation and transfer.

She said: "I love talking about science. That might seem fairly obvious, but compared to all the different ways you can communicate science and research, directly interacting with people is my favourite. It's so rewarding since you are getting continuous feedback from facial expressions and you can change the way you approach things based on how people are responding. It's brilliant to get the 'wow' expression on someone's face when you are describing something!

"The idea I really like about Soapbox Science is getting talking to completely random strangers, rather than people who have made a choice to come to a science outreach event."

### Notes to editors

For more information on Soapbox Science and its Campaign for Change visit the [Soapbox Science \(http://soapboxscience.org/\)](http://soapboxscience.org/) website or follow on Twitter @SoapboxScience.

Further information on the University of Birmingham participation, contact [Kara Bradley \(mailto:k.j.bradley@bham.ac.uk\)](mailto:k.j.bradley@bham.ac.uk), University of Birmingham press office, +44(0)121 414 5134 .