

00:00:07:17 - 00:00:34:13

Adam

Hello and welcome to Microbe Talk, the podcast by the Microbiology Society. I'm Adam, the content and engagement manager. I, joined by some I would say very special guests today. Some microbiology society staff. And we are going to reflect on 2025 and look into 2026. So I'm going to go around the room and I'm going to ask everyone to introduce themselves.

00:00:34:15 - 00:00:36:16

Adam

And we will start with you Alex.

00:00:36:21 - 00:00:48:05

Alex

So I'm Alex Price, I am the program development manager here at the Microbiology Society. So my job is basically to oversee the development and delivery of the society events program.

00:00:48:08 - 00:00:49:22

Adam

Thank you very much. Alex. Bonnie.

00:00:50:03 - 00:00:55:19

Bonnie

Hi, I'm Bonnie, I'm the policy engagement manager. So I lead on all things policy and knocking out Emma.

00:00:55:21 - 00:00:57:12

Adam

Perfect. And Finn.

00:00:57:14 - 00:01:08:09

Ffion

Hi. I'm, for your name. I am the member engagement and community inclusion manager. And as part of that role, I look after the champion scheme. And also the members panel.

00:01:08:11 - 00:01:30:21

Adam

Amazing. Thank you very much for joining us today. I'm hoping in this episode, we just, give the listeners an insight into, what we do on a day to day basis and also things we are excited about or we're very happy about. This happened, this year. And I'm sure there's lots to talk about. So Alex will start with you.

00:01:30:21 - 00:01:44:13

Adam

And people may know us as the big yearly conference, annual conference. But in between that, there's lots and lots of things going on in between. What has been happening this year?

00:01:44:15 - 00:02:06:11

Alex

Yeah, as you say, I think people know us from our annual conference. Obviously it's it's huge. But throughout the rest of the year, we have loads of different things going on. So we run smaller scientific conferences on specific topics within microbiology. We've started running workshops which might be science focused, but they might also be policy related, or linked to industry as well.

00:02:06:11 - 00:02:21:07

Alex

We have webinar series that we run throughout the year based on the Knocking Out AML project, but also the Journal of Medical Microbiology. We have journal linked events, and

we also run sessions on other people's meeting like the Federation of Infection Science conference.

00:02:21:09 - 00:02:41:18

Adam

Amazing. And throughout the year. I mean, we can focus on the annual conference and we will do. But, throughout the year, we bring in, members, to make sure that their research and their voices are represented. So, I suppose, how do you go about making sure that the members are kind of leading our events?

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Alex

Yeah. I mean, there's there's a few different ways, I think you kind of alluded to already, but one of the main ways to get involved is to actually submit your work to our conferences and come and present. But in terms of leading on the content, pretty much all of our events program involves or is led by members of the microbiology society.

00:03:00:15 - 00:03:19:08

Alex

So it might be the elected members of our divisions who are all members. They lead on the content that goes into our annual conference. But we also have groups like the Education Outreach Network who run their own conferences and events, as well as the Early Career Forum, who lead on the Early Career Summer conference throughout the year.

00:03:19:10 - 00:03:40:21

Alex

But also the specific scientific conferences that we run at different times throughout the year. Most of those are applications that are made to us by members through our websites, who will submit a proposal? It'll go through a process of, review and validation and they become the events that you see in our program, like the recent Candida meeting in Berlin.

00:03:40:23 - 00:03:52:08

Adam

I guess is a maybe an an obvious question because of our ethos. But why is it important that, our members are so involved and almost lead on our events throughout the year?

00:03:52:10 - 00:04:22:18

Alex

I mean, it really speaks to our purpose as a membership organization and society is that we exist for the benefit of our members and for the benefit of the microbiology community. So really, our events program has to be a reflection of that and the fact that we have members from all different career stages, but also different areas of microbiology, from everything from virology through to eukaryotic microbiology and bacteriology as well.

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Alex

We have members from all different areas, in different regions of the world as well, coming together to lead on these events.

00:04:29:13 - 00:04:47:02

Adam

So the field. Hello. So I know our members have been, working on ways to make the society, and events more inclusive. And I think our social events around the annual conference kind of represent that. Can you can you talk about the types of things and activities we've been doing?

00:04:47:04 - 00:05:10:22

Ffion

Yeah, definitely. Yeah. So as I mentioned, I work, closely with the members panel and they are responsible for equality, diversity and inclusion at the society. And so part of my role kind of helps them to implement the changes that they want to see. And annual

conferences being quite a big focus for them, because it's obviously our kind of flagship event that everybody knows us for.

00:05:10:23 - 00:05:36:18

Ffion

So making sure that that's as inclusive as possible is really important to them. So for the last few years, I've been helping, the queer microbiology group to organize the LGBTQ Plus Social. So that's been really great. This year was extra special because, we had a microbiology themed drag night, so that was really fun. Yeah.

00:05:36:20 - 00:05:59:04

Ffion

And I know that it was it was a highlight of some people's conference, actually, that that's socials. So, Yeah, that was a really fun one. And I've also been working with the disabled and Neurodivergent members group, to organize their social is making sure that an event kind of caters to people with lots of different accessibility needs.

00:05:59:06 - 00:06:25:17

Ffion

But but that's going really well. And they're looking to kind of build a network as well. Yeah. And also at, annual conference 2025, for the first time, we had, a women's network session, which was organized by NHS, one of our champions. And she's looking to kind of build a network from that session and hopefully continue to hold those sessions in years to come at conference.

00:06:25:19 - 00:06:48:11

Ffion

And we also had the inaugural Eddy Prize, which is awarded to two groups. That wasn't kind of the members panel doing as such, but they're very involved in, in that kind of going forward and all the communications around that. So that was really great to see. And we have the EDI session every year now, which took place before the the prize as well.

00:06:48:11 - 00:07:14:01

Ffion

So that was like the start of annual conference was a real kind of focus on equality, diversity and inclusion, which I think was a nice way to kick things off. Also, one of the groups that won the prize was, the black Microbiologists Association. And so because, they're based in America, but because they were in Liverpool for the conference, we were able to do, a drop in session at the get Involved area with them.

00:07:14:03 - 00:07:22:05

Ffion

So hopefully that that was useful for our members who are black microbiologists that want to know more about how to be part of that community as well.

00:07:22:07 - 00:07:30:05

Adam

So there's been a few campaigns and obviously throughout the year is awareness days. Can you give us a few examples of some this year?

00:07:30:05 - 00:08:00:23

Ffion

So we support our members to, write blogs and take part in Q and A's for awareness days throughout the year. A lot of those will be equality diversity and inclusion focus. But we also support, champions to, organize events around scientific awareness days and also activities as well. So we asked champions to get involved in world Amr awareness Week in November.

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Ffion

And they organized outreach activities in lots of different settings. So we had some organizing things in schools, universities, online, and also in farms or on farms. So yeah, lots of different things going on. In the UK, Nigeria and Sudan as well. But I think one of

my favorite activities around Awareness Day, was in September for International Microorganism Day.

00:08:31:04 - 00:09:00:06

Ffion

And it was something that we'd done the year before as well, where we asked our champions to tell us their favorite microbe. And the, the reason it's their favorite. And then we have a champion called Eliza, who's, an amazing illustrator. So she drew images of the microbes as kind of cartoons. And then we put those out on social media as a series of of images and, quotes of why the people's favorite.

00:09:00:07 - 00:09:14:07

Ffion

And I knew it was going to be popular because it had been the year before, but it it was still a shock to see how popular it was. And it kind of almost went viral. Like by all standards, it went viral anyway. And so yeah, that was really great.

00:09:14:07 - 00:09:37:15

Adam

And I suppose, just on that, we are asking the membership to submit their own kind of content because, you know, there's lots of things happening internationally that we can't get to with a camera or, you know, video. So we are, you know, if there is an activity and we've supported it in some way or you want to share what you're doing, send us, send us what you're doing.

00:09:37:17 - 00:09:54:14

Adam

We'd love to see it. So funny. I think it's been a busy year for policy and fussy. Could you, I suppose is. I feel like I've put you on the spot a bit here, because it's quite a broad question, but could you just kind of explain what working in policy entails?

00:09:54:16 - 00:10:16:19

Bonnie

Sure. So I think working in policy means providing evidence to different stakeholders to support their decision making. So this could be government, parliament, civil servants, regulators and funders. And we need to present this in kind of a clear and accessible way that can be understood and acted upon. So in my role, it's about advancing people's understanding of microbiology and also influencing stakeholders.

00:10:16:19 - 00:10:41:18

Bonnie

Prioritize and take action on, microbiology related issues. So there's kind of two streams. There's reactive, which is about responding to consultations inquiries and calls for evidence. So this year we've responded to the UK Parliament Science, Innovation and Technology Committee. We've impacted on the Irish National Action Plan and the Global Action, Action Plan. And we've also submitted evidence to Ireland's independent Covid 19 evaluation.

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Bonnie

And then on the proactive side, it's more thinking about what we think decision makers should be looking at. And this comes in the form of briefings that we've done on air and wastewater microbiomes and biofilms. And also events. So kind of bringing together, expertise in workshops.

00:10:57:11 - 00:11:05:19

Adam

So how important to your role and yeah, driving changes forward, is kind of using the expertise of our membership.

00:11:05:23 - 00:11:24:19

Bonnie

Yeah. I would say our members knowledge and experience kind of underpin everything we do in policy. So this could be identifying emerging issues. So many of the policy briefings we do kind of originate from members saying that this is a topic that they think



that should be more interested. And we also have members act as reviewers to kind of ensure scientific accuracy.

00:11:24:21 - 00:11:46:01

Bonnie

We also use the kind of breadth and diversity of our membership. So because our membership spans so many disciplines, we can respond to consultations kind of ranging from pharmacy dispensing to global food security. And that also decision makers respond not only to evidence but also to personal experience and storytelling. So I often find like the passion of our members have for that research helps us make those connections.

00:11:46:02 - 00:11:58:08

Adam

Yeah. And I suppose like a good example of this would be looking at AMA, which is a big project. Firstly, quickly, what is it and how is how's it all going?

00:11:58:10 - 00:12:18:17

Bonnie

Sure. So, the knock out ML project came about a couple of years ago, and this was also from kind of input from our member that they needed more of like a voice on antimicrobial resistance. So it covers it spans the whole breadth of the organization. So we do events. We do, kind of encouraging journal publishing, public engagement.

00:12:18:17 - 00:12:46:05

Bonnie

And then also the policy side. And we're really trying to kind of drive forward, meaningful change on antimicrobial resistance, both in the UK and internationally. So, yeah, it's been another really exciting year for knocking out Amr. I would say my highlight is probably, we ran a, workshop in Mexico in collaboration with the British Embassy there, and that was about kind of understanding the landscape of antimicrobial resistance in Mexico and thinking about policy recommendations we can give to officials there.

00:12:46:10 - 00:13:04:04

Adam

And I feel like this is this is this is the reasons why I asked for in the room is quite interesting. I think looking at Amr is is where we all have to come together. You know, we've got the events, we've got the policy and we got the, the membership and making sure that we're listening to people internationally as well.

00:13:04:04 - 00:13:27:09

Adam

And, doing the content and trying to work with you all also. It's, it's an exciting project. So let's just talk about kind of highlights. I mean, annual conference is always an obvious one to say in general, but it is amazing because we we are in the office a lot and just getting like touching base with the membership again.

00:13:27:11 - 00:13:32:11

Adam

And also there was an event I didn't, I went to in Liverpool, there's a whole site called.

00:13:32:14 - 00:13:36:09

Alex

Understanding and Predicting Microbial Evolutionary Dynamics.

00:13:36:14 - 00:13:56:10

Adam

I had the best time. Like it was so fun. Just as I say, I think I had, been working in the office for about 4 or 5 months and I was like, guys, I really want to get to this event. And just, just, touching base of the membership again. It really is so fun. So those are my two highlights.

00:13:56:12 - 00:13:58:20

Adam

Anyone got any highlights?

00:13:58:22 - 00:14:22:12

Alex

Yeah. I mean, just just following on from what you've said, I is going to sound really cheesy, but it is honestly, the people and the members of the microbiology society that make it a really rewarding job. So for me, especially running events, especially annual conference, but actually throughout the entire program, it's, you know, it's speaking to poster presenters at annual conference is like my happy place during that week.

00:14:22:14 - 00:14:41:08

Alex

When you can just kind of chill out and find out about some of science. But yeah, my other one or the other end of the scale, we ran a, a meeting on the microbial genomics of eukaryotes up in Glasgow. University of Strathclyde, quite recently. And it was the complete opposite end of the scale two annual conference.

00:14:41:09 - 00:15:04:12

Alex

It was probably about 40 people in a small room. But there was so much engagement. There was so much of a community feel. And those people were coming from quite disparate areas of eukaryotic microbiology, but they were linked together through the sort of interdisciplinary, genomics topic and omics topic of the subject. And they were all so interested in each other's work.

00:15:04:14 - 00:15:18:06

Alex

And the fact is that that meeting wouldn't have taken place if the microbiology society hadn't been involved, because we are this nexus in this meeting place for different areas of microbiology to come together. So I would put that up there as my highlights as well.

00:15:18:11 - 00:15:27:10

Adam

Okay. So pronounce the group. You can't say annual conference even though we're all excited about it. What we excited about.

00:15:27:12 - 00:15:49:15

Bonnie

Yeah. So I'm really looking forward to working more with our international members in 2026. So policy, we've kind of we have done some international work, but we have been mainly focused on the UK and Ireland. And this is the year we really want to empower our members to start interacting with their policymakers and kind of establish these relationships that are going to go beyond the life of the knock out Armagh project.

00:15:49:17 - 00:15:52:11

Bonnie

So I'm excited to see what form that takes.

00:15:52:13 - 00:15:57:19

Adam

Nice. Is that is that including the Mexico work?

00:15:57:20 - 00:16:12:15

Bonnie

Yeah. So Mexico was part of our international engagement. And we're trying to do two things where we engage kind of with organizations nationally and then also with our members on kind of a more personal basis. So the idea is to have kind of global but local actions.

00:16:12:15 - 00:16:25:14

Ffion

Bonnie and I have been working together as well, because obviously I've got lots of contacts in the champion scheme, particularly in Nigeria, who are doing lots of great

work. So been kind of connecting them, and Bonnie's been meeting with them to discuss policy in Nigeria.

00:16:25:14 - 00:16:38:22

Bonnie

Yeah, it's been great to kind of have those connections with members because you can do research and you can think you know what the landscape is like, but actually having those conversations and people saying, this is how policy really works. So this is how you actually going to have an impact has been invaluable.

00:16:39:00 - 00:17:03:15

Adam

You know, I don't know if this is going to be interesting for anyone, but my big thing that I want to achieve this year is that I noticed, you know, gym, large poster sessions as I go around and I film and I realized that like on one end, you got about seven conversations and then I just, I want to find a way to film it so you can go from one room to another, because there's one conversation happening there, and it feels like a mile away.

00:17:03:15 - 00:17:22:22

Adam

And there's like another great conversation happening there. I don't know how to film that, to just make it look like everywhere you go, people are helping each other and networking. And so that's my creative non science. Way of doing it I feel like I need to get a drone. Yeah I think I.

00:17:22:22 - 00:17:23:08

Ffion

Was going to.

00:17:23:08 - 00:17:25:09

Adam

Say yeah it's got to be drone. Okay cool.

00:17:25:10 - 00:17:28:08

Alex

I mean we could just put them on the back of an e-scooter.

00:17:28:10 - 00:17:29:08

Adam

Perfect.

00:17:29:10 - 00:17:32:19

Alex

Roll around on the lookout for this. Really cover that ground.

00:17:32:23 - 00:17:35:17

Adam

I love my job. That is awesome.

00:17:35:23 - 00:17:40:17

Alex

I'm creating a nightmare of health and safety operations.

00:17:40:18 - 00:17:50:06

Adam

Okay, cool. So that's set in stone. Adam on the scooter. Perfect. So, Alex, 2026, talk to me.

00:17:50:08 - 00:17:52:05

Alex

So I'm not allowed to talk about annual conference.

00:17:52:11 - 00:17:58:06

Adam

I just want to say we love a new campaign, but it is such a highlight. I'm removing it.

00:17:58:08 - 00:18:24:10

Alex

Yeah, there's a few things. But I think I think one of the nice things with this job is the, the new opportunities that come up. And the fact is, we've been really diversifying the kinds of events that we run, but are also just involved in, over the last few years. I've already mentioned that we run sessions at external meetings, like the Federation of Infection Societies conference every year.

00:18:24:12 - 00:19:04:06

Alex

But we've actually got a new collaboration coming up with a group called Elric who run the annual Drug discovery Conference. This is a, group that brings in a lot of industry professionals that we don't tend to reach at our own events. But we're actually running a session on, the use of microbes in, in drug discovery, which I'm really excited about because these external events, we get to showcase the expertise that actually exists within the microbiology society and how that can interlink with different disciplines, outside of the realms of traditional, microbiology and academic research, as well.

00:19:04:08 - 00:19:20:12

Adam

Thank you very much for rounding out the 2025. And looking into 2026 has lots of exciting things coming up. So I will I feel like I'm on some sort of new show now. So I will say goodbye to Alex. Goodbye and Bonnie.

00:19:20:18 - 00:19:21:14

Bonnie

Goodbye.

00:19:21:16 - 00:19:22:09

Adam

And then.

00:19:22:12 - 00:19:23:07

Ffion

Goodbye.

00:19:23:09 - 00:19:36:06

Adam

It's goodbye from us. Thank you. Everyone who's been listening to my group talk on behalf of the Microbiology Society. We wish you a very happy New Year.