



Clare is a lecturer in medical microbiology and teaches on both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at home and overseas. She has a keen interest in science communication, public engagement and equality, and holds regional coherence funding for a project on women in science. She is also the local Edinburgh co-ordinator of [Science Grrl](#), a grass-roots organisation aiming to show that science is for everyone.

Name

Dr Clare Taylor

Title

Lecturer in Medical Microbiology

How did you get started working in your field?

I didn't really have much knowledge of microbiology until my degree in biology but once I got my teeth into it, I just really clicked with the subject – microbes are fascinating! Before the end of my degree I applied for a PhD and won a place in a well-funded lab. After my PhD I initially got a job at a pharmaceutical company but I quickly realised that it wasn't for me and that it was being at the lab bench that I really enjoyed. Here I had a bit of luck and I was offered a position back with my PhD supervisor on a different project which enabled me to develop a whole new set of skills. After this, I moved to another lab for another postdoc which allowed me to narrow down my interest to the area that I now work in.

What do you enjoy about working in your field?

I am absolutely fascinated by microbes, bacteria in particular and I consider myself very fortunate to have a job that allows me to do research and teach a captive audience about my areas of interest. Although research is tough and building resilience is key to surviving grant rejections and criticism of manuscripts, I don't think anything can beat the feeling of completing a set of experiments that shows you have contributed some new scientific knowledge. Although I don't get to do the lab work anymore, I now enjoy seeing my research students make the same journey. I also enjoy being able to offer undergraduate students opportunities to do research placements in the lab during the summer vacation – this really helps to set them on their way!

Was there anything which or anyone who particularly helped you establish your career?

Although I didn't necessarily think it at the time (!) my PhD supervisor Professor Ian Roberts was instrumental in me following this career path. He constantly pushed and challenged

people and you had to build confidence to meet those challenges. Although he wasn't my boss at the time, I wouldn't even have considered applying for a lectureship when I did if it hadn't been for him slapping an advert down on my desk and demanding that I apply for the position. Of course he's not the only person that has helped me but he's probably the most memorable!

Is there anything which you think the University or society could do to encourage a balance of people working in STEMM?

Evidence in the literature suggests that there is a problem around unconscious bias and the University could immediately introduce training around unconscious basis particularly for those involved in recruitment and selection or those on promotion panels. But we should also extend this to training for staff who teach or support students because if we are unaware of our bias we may inadvertently influence students through our language or choice of examples. In terms of societal changes, we seem to be making slow progress and there is much to be done. Tackling gender stereotypes in the media may be a good place to start. We need to get away from the image of scientists, for example, as slightly older, white males and it is great to see an engaging scientist such as Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock take centre stage on BBC's The Sky at Night as an antidote to the usual stereotype. An organisation I'm involved with – [ScienceGrrl](#) - is trying to tackle the gender stereotype image from the grass roots and show that science is for everyone.