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MY TOWN

Q and A: Griffith uni microbiologist Kate Seib

AUGUST 15, 2016 | 37 | |



Tell us about who you are and what you do?

I am a microbiologist currently working at the [Institute for Glycomics](#), Griffith University on the Gold Coast. I completed a PhD in microbiology in 2004 from the University of Queensland and then worked for 6.5 years at Novartis Vaccines in Siena, Italy. During this time I was part of the team that developed the serogroup B meningococcal vaccine (Bexsero™). This vaccine has been approved in >37 countries, including Australia, and >1 million doses have been distributed since 2013. I returned to Australia in late 2012 and set up my own research group at the Institute for Glycomics, with funding from the National Health and Medical Research Council. One of my main areas of focus is the development of a gonococcal vaccine. Infection with *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* can lead to severe reproductive complications, including infertility and can also lead to increased HIV transmission. Due to increasing antibiotic resistance, it is feared that this disease may become untreatable in the near future. So it is essential that we increase our efforts on vaccine development.



What impact do you hope your work will make on the world?

Infectious diseases are one of the major causes of illness and death worldwide, with approximately half of all deaths in children under the age of 5 years being caused by infection. My research aims to understand the steps involved bacterial infections, so that we can develop new drugs and vaccines to cure and prevent these diseases.

Why do you love being in this field?

I am fascinated by the ability of bacteria to adapt and survive in any situation they find themselves in. They multiply so fast (they replicate in minutes/hours compared to the years/decades animals and humans take to reproduce) and are constantly evolving to evade and outsmart our immune system. While this makes my work very frustrating at times, I really enjoy the challenge of trying to find weaknesses in the bacteria's armour that we could use as targets for antibiotics or vaccines.

Why is it so important for women in technology to have visible role models and mentors to look up to?

Despite the ongoing advances in gender equality, there is still significant room for improvement in terms of seeing female scientist progress into senior roles. In my field, there are usually more female than male PhD students, but once you look at the Professors, less than 20% are female. So strong role models and mentors are essential to help inspire or guide female scientists through their career paths.

Is there a lot of cool stuff in tech going on in the Gold Coast?

I am currently working at The Institute for Glycomics, which is a flagship biomedical research institute at Griffith University's Gold Coast campus. The purpose-designed building is located adjacent to the new Gold Coast University Hospital and is an integral



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Your favourite moments

What's the best beach on the Gold t Is it Kirra for the surf? Currumbin b it's family friendly? Or Coolangatta l ice cream? **Everyone's got a favou share yours with the Gold Coast r here.**

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M	T	W	T	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	
8	9	10	11	12	13	
15	16	17	18	19	20	
22	23	24	25	26	27	
29	30	31	1	2	3	

MON **Gold Coast Eisteddfod**
 22 July 28 @ 9:00 am - Septembe pm

component of the emerging Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct, making it ideally situated for translational research, clinical trials and research training. The Institute's advantage is its focused approach to drug, vaccine and diagnostic technology discovery and development using its world-leading scientific expertise and a unique multidisciplinary approach.

What's next for you?

Research typically involves small, incremental advances in knowledge. I hope to continue having success with my research, so that one day it will translate into new treatments or vaccines that can improve public health.

Outside of work, what are your hobbies and passions?

I am passionate about improving public health, increasing public awareness of the science behind health issues, and promoting the role of women in science, and I am actively involved in several groups and community activities. I am the QLD Chair of the Australian Society for Microbiology (ASM), which aims to advance the science of microbiology in Australia and promote the awareness of microbiology and its role in everyday life. I am also regularly contribute to School outreach activities organised by Griffith Science on the GO!, and events during Science Week. I will be presenting my research to the community at the first Australian Soapbox Science Event, to be held in Brisbane this week (Sat August 20, King George Square). This is a UK-based grass-roots science outreach organisation that promotes women in science and brings cutting edge research onto urban streets.

- *Kate is a finalist in the Life Sciences and/or Infotech Research Award category of the 2016 Women in Technology awards. For more, visit www.wit.org.au.*
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THU 25	Bingo August 25 @ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
FRI 26	Surfers Paradise Beachfront Markets August 26 @ 4:00 am - 9:00 pm
FRI 26	Gold Coast Show August 26 @ 9:00 am - August 9:00 pm



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