

#SundayWiMIN23 Week 26: Dr Rachel MacCann

Dr Rachel McCann is an Infectious Diseases Specialist Registrar in St Vincent's Hospital in Dublin and the Operations Officer and co-founder of Irish Doctors for the Environment (IDE).

Rachel initially completed a Bachelor of Science degree, specialising in Neuroscience, achieving a first class honours in 2012 from Trinity College Dublin. She subsequently entered the Graduate Entry Medicine course in the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI), graduating in 2016. She completed her Medicine BST and RCPI examinations in 2019 and achieved a diploma in Tropical Medicine and Hygiene from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine in 2019.

In 2020 she was awarded the prestigious ICAT fellowship and entered the Infectious Diseases HST. She is presently undertaking a PhD with the ICAT programme, and her research focus involves the role of inflammation and aging HIV, in particular with regards to the gut microbiome. She has worked in the area of HIV since a medical student, volunteering with the charity HIV Ireland and establishing RCSI's first ever World Aids Day event in 2015. As a member of the British HIV Association, Rachel won a Research Award in 2022 and through this grant was awarded an honorary contract in University College, London. Rachel recently helped develop a Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) Community Advisory Board for the Infectious Diseases- Clinical Trial Network Ireland (ID-CTNI), to enable meaningful involvement of patient engagement and participation in research.

The protection of our environment and the impact of climate change has always been a passion and in 2018 together with 4 other female colleagues, Rachel co-founded the group, Irish Doctors for the Environment (IDE). Since its formation, IDE has become a registered charity and is now composed of 26 committee members and 11 working groups, each working to tackle different areas of healthcare and climate change. IDE aims to create awareness among healthcare workers on the impact of climate change on health and inspire action through 4 pillars of Change, Advocacy, Education and Science. Representing IDE, Rachel sits on the board of the Climate and Health Alliance, which brings together a different number of public health organisations and advocacy groups from around the island of Ireland.

Looking to the future for IDE, Rachel is encouraged by the recent publication of the HSE's Climate Action Plan which aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2050 and hopes to see the measures set out in the Climate Action plan delivered. She will continue to support the growth of IDE, by engaging with healthcare workers and advocating for change. In the meantime, she has ambitious plans to complete her PhD and CSCT training and embark on a clinical academic career through the support of ICAT.

In her downtime, she can be found in the outdoors, with a love of hiking, sea swimming and the odd kayaking excursion. Rachel is grateful to her fiancé, Dónal and family, for their ongoing support and wants to thank her colleagues and PhD supervisors for their guidance and patience. Finally, she wants to thank her fellow IDE members, for their never-ending enthusiasm, passion and dedication.