

Special Gender session

Held during the 9th FAIS Conference, Nairobi Kenya (2nd December, 2014)

The 1st gender session of the 9th FAIS Conference was graced by a large audience of both established and young and up-coming scientists. The special guest speaker was Dr Jane Kengeya-Kayondo, a medical epidemiologist working with the Wellcome Trust as a Special advisor for Africa. Her presentation focused on “Women in Science.”

She aptly pointed out that there remained the glaring fact that the number of women in science, in both academia and research, were in the minority in comparison to their male counterparts. Moreover, there appeared to be a steady decline as one rose up the ladder to the level of Professorship, Senior Lectureship or Senior Researcher. A number of reasons were cited for this trend and included especially family commitments that lead to women receiving their doctorates later in life. It appears that for those who have been successful, the common story is that they have had to really struggle for it, working twice as hard as men. This is all compounded by the fact that as women we lack proper mentorship and people we can share our successes with, or those who can act as referees.

It remains therefore, that the current cream of the crop, those in attendance, should take it upon themselves to fill in this glaring gap to ensure that young up-coming women scientists do not fall into the same trap, but are offered better mentors and support from the outset!!

Dr Kengeya-Kayondo has worked for many years in Africa! She and many others remain a great inspiration, and great example that it is indeed possible to balance family life whilst being a top career woman even in this competitive field of science. Indeed, several other participants that included male researchers also shared with the audience the great impact women can make by acting as role models for up-coming young women in science!!

The 1st gender session was clearly a success and highlighted the need for more forums to discuss issues with respect to women in science!

The organizers of the 9th FAIS Conference and the Kenya Society for Immunology would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to IUIS gender committee for supporting this symposium.



Dr Jane Kengeya-Kayondo (Invited Speaker)



Gender session participants



Michelle Letarte (Representative from IUIS Gender committee)



Rebecca Waihenya (Lecturer JKUAT, Nairobi)



Lucy Ochola (KSI General secretary)



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