Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

London International Youth Science Forum 2026

Shaoyang Tong

Attending the 67th London International Youth Science Forum was one of the most valuable experiences of my university studies so far. Bringing together hundreds of young scientists from around the world, LIYSF gave me the opportunity to explore scientific research beyond the classroom, meet students from diverse backgrounds and gain a broader perspective on my future studies and career.

The forum opened with a keynote lecture by Professor John O'Keefe, winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He introduced his research on cognitive maps in the brain and shared the scientific journey behind his discoveries. Hearing about the years of questioning and experimentation behind a major breakthrough reminded me that research requires not only knowledge, but also curiosity, patience and perseverance.

Among the many Principal and Specialist Lectures, I was particularly interested in those related to medicine and biomedical research. Dr Farhat Khanim's Taking the MYC out of Lymphoma explored the role of MYC in Burkitt lymphoma and demonstrated how understanding the molecular mechanisms of cancer can reveal new therapeutic strategies. I found the connection between fundamental biological research and potential clinical applications particularly interesting, as it showed how studying disease at the molecular level can eventually contribute to the development of better treatments.

Another memorable lecture was Natalija Vujacic's Caught After the Kiss: Tracking Cell Interactions with LIPSTIC. She introduced an innovative technique that allows researchers to identify immune cells that have interacted with one another in vivo. What interested me most was that the lecture focused not on a new medicine, but on a new research tool. It showed me that scientific breakthroughs can also begin with developing better ways to observe and understand biological processes.

Professor Jameel Inal's lecture on Extracellular Vesicles was particularly relevant to

my interest in pharmaceutical science. I was surprised to learn that extracellular vesicles, once considered cellular debris, are now recognised as important mediators of cell communication, with potential applications in diagnosis and drug delivery. This demonstrated how rapidly scientific understanding can change and how previously overlooked biological mechanisms can become promising areas of medical research.

The wider LIYSF programme also introduced me to subjects outside my own field, including artificial intelligence, astronomy, quantum technology, public health and gene therapy. This variety showed me how increasingly interconnected modern science has become and encouraged me to remain open to ideas from disciplines beyond chemistry and pharmaceutical science.

Beyond the lectures, I had the opportunity to visit both the University of Cambridge and Regeneron UK. Cambridge offered an insight into the environment of academic research and the culture of scientific discovery at a world-leading university. Regeneron provided a different perspective, showing how research operates within the pharmaceutical industry and how scientific discoveries can ultimately be translated into medicines. Experiencing both academic and industrial research environments helped me better understand the different pathways available within pharmaceutical and biomedical science.

Another important part of LIYSF was meeting students from many different countries. Through cultural activities, meals and informal conversations, we exchanged ideas about science, education and our future ambitions. Despite our different backgrounds, our shared interest in science made it easy to connect, and the friendships I made became one of the most memorable parts of the two weeks.

Looking back, LIYSF strengthened my interest in pharmaceutical and biomedical research while broadening my understanding of science beyond my own discipline. Most importantly, it showed me that scientific progress depends not only on knowledge, but also on curiosity, collaboration and the willingness to explore unfamiliar ideas. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in LIYSF and will carry the knowledge, friendships and inspiration from these two weeks into my future studies and career.