Meet Dr. Alexander P. Pulis, Thieme Chemistry Journals Awardee 2024!

Dr. Alexander P. Pulis *obtained his MSci and PhD degrees from the University of Bristol (UK). In 2014, he began postdoctoral work at the University of Toronto (Canada). Alex moved to the University of Manchester in 2015 to take a position as fixed-term lecturer in organic chemistry. He began his first independent position as a Lecturer of Organic Chemistry at the University of Leicester (UK) in 2018.*

Thieme: Which field of organic chemistry are you interested in the most and why?

Dr. Pulis: Too many! It is hard to pick just one, especially when you consider all the areas of science that utilize organic chemistry. How organic chemistry is interlinked with the rest of science is fascinating and it is what attracted me to it in the first place.

Thieme: Following that, what is the focus of your current research activity?

Dr. Pulis: My current research is focused on using the reactivity of main group elements, e.g. boron, to drive new catalytic processes that solve challenges in chemical synthesis. Main group elements have fascinating reactivity but have been largely overlooked in terms of catalysis. There is a lot of unexplored reactivity in this part of the periodic table that makes it an exciting area to be in.

Thieme: What do you think about the modern role and prospects of organic chemistry?

Dr. Pulis: Organic chemistry is relevant to nearly all areas of science and will continue to be so. The biggest challenge in our time is sustainability and the knowledge that organic chemists have will be critical for transitioning towards sustainability and will define what that future might be.

Thieme: Which difficulties are there for young upcoming chemists in your field? Do you have any tips?

Dr. Pulis: There are lots of challenges but ultimately the reward is worth it. There is no other job that will allow you the same level of intellectual freedom, and the opportunity to work with amazing people. The main challenge for any experimental subject such as ours is the time demand. Time in the lab is generally proportional to the number of results. My tip is to make the time in the lab count by planning and recording data properly, so you don't have to unnecessarily repeat experiments. Also, remember that negative results are results. Having something to focus on outside the lab has helped me through the difficult research times and has made me more productive in the long run.

Thieme: What is your most important scientific achievement to date and why?

Dr. Pulis: At this point it is too early to tell. We have developed some useful methods using organoborane catalysts for amine functionalisation and we have many more exciting discoveries to report.

Thieme: Could you tell us something about yourself outside the lab, such as your hobbies or extra-work interests?

Dr. Pulis: Outside the lab, my son Owain, partner Jem and dog Betty keep me busy. They are my world, and I am my happiest when walking with them in the Welsh mountains. I also enjoy running - a good friend introduced me to parkrun and I have since completed races from 5K up to 24 hours in length. I enjoy listening to science fiction and fantasy audiobooks, and podcasts about running!