

In the news

SCIENCE, OUTREACH AND PRIZES



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In July, nuclear physicists from around the world gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for the International Nuclear Physics Conference (INPC). The conference, held every 3 years, is the largest nuclear physics conference in the world, with over 400 talks given this year. Topics such as nuclear astrophysics, nuclear structure, facilities and instrumentation, and applications of nuclear physics all made a strong showing. “I was delighted that INPC2019 was able to showcase the diverse range of topics within nuclear science, as well as its relationship with other areas of science and the importance of its applications and societal impacts,” said David Ireland, conference chair.

A new strand of the programme this year was outreach and engagement, with a session dedicated to the topic. Nuclear physics often struggles with a negative public image, being naively associated by the general public with war and disasters. Researchers shared their experiences with publicizing other aspects of nuclear research, such as nuclear medicine, as well as educational activities in schools and citizen science projects. The feeling from these discussions was that outreach yields results, and is good fun. INPC also put outreach into practice, hosting a public lecture ‘Nuclear physics and the making of the modern periodic table’ by Jim Al-Khalili, professor of theoretical physics and regular science presenter on British television. There was also an afternoon of public outreach from the [Binding Blocks](#) project, which uses 26,000 Lego bricks to build an 8 m long model of the nuclear chart, with each nuclide represented by a tower whose height represents the nuclide’s mass excess.

INPC hosts the award ceremony for the International Union of Pure and Applied Physics (IUPAP) Young Scientist Prize in nuclear physics. This year, Xiaofei Yang from Peking University, China, was recognized for her work to develop laser spectroscopy techniques, Chun Shen from Wayne State University, USA, received a prize for developing a code package to simulate heavy-ion collisions and Or Hen from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, was awarded for his studies of short-range correlations in nuclei. In addition, the Institute of Physics presented their early career award for nuclear physics research to Robert Shearman at the National Physical Laboratory, UK, for his work on radionuclide metrology and nuclear structure physics. “It was clear that there is a wealth of new research talent, which makes for an exciting future for nuclear physics,” said Ireland.

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