

Prestigious Edinburgh Medal awarded to Prof. Heidi Larson

Professor Heidi J. Larson, PhD, Professor of Anthropology, Risk and Decision Science and the Founding Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine was presented with the prestigious Edinburgh Medal as part of Edinburgh Science Festival 2021.

The Medal Address Ceremony will be broadcast on Sunday 4 July at 7pm on the Festival's website: <https://www.sciencefestival.co.uk/event-details/the-edinburgh-medal-2021>



L-R – Simon Gage, CEO of Edinburgh Science, Lord Provost Frank Ross, Professor Heidi Larson, Professor Linda Bauld and Professor Ian Wall, Edinburgh Science Board of Directors Professor Linda Bauld, Bruce and John Usher Professor of Public Health, Edinburgh University delivered the Oration and the Vote of Thanks at the Ceremony.

The Edinburgh Medal is an award presented to women and men of science who are judged to have made a significant contribution to the understanding and wellbeing of humanity, previous recipients include Jane Goodall, Sunita Narain and David Attenborough.



Professor Larson with the Edinburgh Medal

Prof. Larson said: “I am honoured to receive this year’s Edinburgh Medal. The Medal reflects not only a recognition of my scientific work, for which I am very grateful, but also an

important acknowledgement of the challenging information and trust environment, which needs new approaches as we continually renew the relationship between science and society.”

Prof. Linda Bauld said: “Vaccines save lives. History tells us that this is obvious, but the Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us. Professor Larson has been a champion for the role of social scientists in infectious disease response. Her research has helped us better understand how to build trust and address misinformation as we emerge from the current crisis.

“We owe her, and the researchers she has mentored, a debt of gratitude for their work on vaccine hesitancy and the social and political factors that affect uptake. I’m delighted to be involved in awarding her the Edinburgh medal. It’s a fitting recognition from a City that established the first University department and first chair in public health in the UK.”

Amanda Tyndall, Creative and Festival Director at Edinburgh Science Festival said: “Vaccines are a vital part of our response to infectious diseases but global uncertainty and misinformation can hamper efforts to combat the challenges these diseases present. At a time like this the work of Prof. Larson and her Vaccine Confidence Project – approaching the issue with empathy and understanding, not condemnation – has never been more important and we are very proud she is receiving the 2021 Edinburgh Medal.”

Edinburgh’s Lord Provost Frank Ross said: “The Edinburgh Medal is awarded to men and women of science and technology who have made significant contributions to humanity. This year vaccinations have come to the forefront of all our minds and it is entirely fitting that Prof Heidi Larson is the recipient of this year’s medal for her work as Founding Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project which evaluates and addresses vaccine hesitancy.

“Prof Larson’s work is vital in recognising the importance of popular and widespread misunderstandings and providing guidance to engage the public early and pre-empting potential disruptions to roll out of vaccines. Congratulations Heidi.”

All images – Credit Chris Scott