



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bermuda Principles event merges science and business

Hamilton, Bermuda, February 20, 2018—Scientists and researchers from around the world are gathering in Bermuda this week for the second edition of a conference exploring the field of genetic research.

Premier the Hon David Burt will officially open “[Bermuda Principles: Impact on Splicing](#)” Wednesday evening at the Fairmont Southampton. The conference, which runs through Saturday, has registered 50 delegates, along with an impressive roster of 36 speakers and panellists from 11 countries, including Australia, Denmark, Switzerland and South Africa. Among the attendees are prominent geneticists, scientists, professors, researchers, PhD students working in international labs, biotech representatives and investors.

“I am elated to see the growth of the conference since last year’s event,” said Bermudian Dr Carika Weldon, a biomedical researcher with her own lab at De Montfort University, UK, who conceived of the event and launched it last February. “My main aim has been to promote the Bermuda Principles document that was created at a conference that took place here back in 1996, and it’s awesome to realise that thanks to the work we’ve done, more Bermudians, including our MPs, know about this now. It’s an important legacy, and we should all be proud of the role Bermuda has played in genetics history.”

In 1996, a scientific milestone occurred in Bermuda, after US and UK scientists met on the island to negotiate the completion of the Human Genome Project. In a landmark agreement, they decided gene sequences developed by numerous private labs would be made publicly available worldwide to advance scientific research. The agreement, called “The Bermuda Principles,” contributed to the pace and reach of scientific research that followed.

This year’s conference pays tribute to that history, while forging forward with a contemporary agenda of sessions dedicated to topics ranging from bioinformatics, regulation, technologies,

therapeutics, gene splicing and disease, and commercialisation of university research. Speakers include keynote Adrian Krainer, Professor at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York; Jean Beggs, Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor, Edinburgh; Daniel Larson, of the Center for Cancer Research, Maryland; Franco Pagani, of the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology in Trieste, Italy; and Robin Reed, Professor of Cell Biology, Harvard Medical School.

One of the conference highlights will focus on how to commercialise scientific ideas, leveraging investment to turn them into viable businesses.

“As a researcher at a university, I had to quickly realise that what I was doing today could become a business venture tomorrow,” said Weldon, who is also creating a foundation to promote science in the Bermuda community. “I have had to get my own head around commercialisation. In academia, we’re taught to do experiments and publish, but sometimes that prevents you from turning an idea into a profitable venture. That’s why I wanted to include this topic in the conference.”

The closing session will feature the BDA’s consultant for Emerging Technologies John Narraway and others discussing the island’s attraction to biotech investors as a blue-chip international finance centre. It’s one of numerous public-engagement events linking science to education, healthcare and business that will see conference participation by students, teachers, and medical and corporate professionals.

“Bermuda has long been the domicile for many established and well-known biotech companies,” noted Narraway. “We see a conference like this as an opportunity to build a new ecosystem for early-stage biotech and life-science ventures. The BDA is participating in the event as a way to connect with these researchers and show the value the island can bring to those looking to transform their research into a commercial opportunity and licensable product.”

Thursday night will feature a Bermuda Youth Parliament debate on the research use of immortal HeLa cells derived from a cancer patient. The event, to be live-streamed on Facebook,

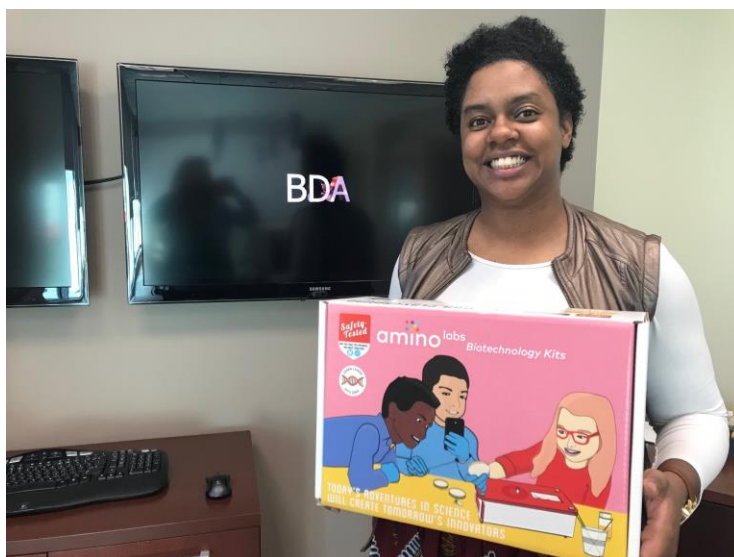


Twitter and Instagram, will be opened by Dr Daniel Ford, Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Bermuda MPs have been invited to attend and winning students will receive smart phones courtesy of Digicel.

On Friday, local high-schoolers will carry out a genetic-engineering experiment using kits provided by Amino Labs in which colourful jellyfish DNA will be added to bacteria.

Saturday afternoon will see science teachers from local schools join doctors and other professionals for a panel discussion on integrating research into healthcare and education curricula.

The leading partner of the conference is Bank of Bermuda Foundation. Sponsors include: Bermuda Business Development Agency (BDA), Bermuda Technology Initiative, Bermuda Tourism Authority (BTA), De Montfort University, New England BioLabs, RNA Society, Island Press and Amino Labs.



Bermuda Principles conference organiser Dr Carika Weldon with a genetic-engineering kit donated by Amino Labs for Bermuda students to carry out a DNA experiment at the event this Friday



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CONNECTING BUSINESS

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