



# DISCOURSE

Royal Irish Academy Public Lecture Series

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**Speaker: Dr Lalita Ramakrishnan, Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases, University of Cambridge**

**Respondent: Joseph Keane MRIA, Professor of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin**

**Thursday 26 May 2022, 6pm (IST) Online**



## **Tuberculosis: the persistent global scourge of humanity**

Tuberculosis (TB) is an ancient disease that has killed more people than any other infectious disease. Despite more than 60 years of antibiotics, TB remains a major cause of sickness and death and was the second largest infectious killer in 2020 after Covid-19. New drugs and an effective vaccine are desperately needed. To better understand the disease pathogenesis, we have developed the zebrafish as a model of TB. In early life, the zebrafish is transparent, and we have used this feature to examine how the TB bacterium evades and exploits host immune cells in real-time in live animals. Then, by manipulating zebrafish genes, we have uncovered the genetic and mechanistic bases of the disease. This has led us to a new understanding of host genetic susceptibilities and potentials for new anti-TB drugs that we are showing are relevant for humans too

### **Our Speaker:**

Dr Lalita Ramakrishnan is Professor of Immunology and Infectious Diseases at the University of Cambridge, UK. She received her medical degree from the Baroda Medical College in India, and her PhD in Immunology from Tufts University in Boston. After completing medical training and a fellowship in Infectious Diseases she moved to Stanford University as a postdoctoral fellow where she began her research into TB. She then joined the faculty at the University of Washington, where she developed a zebrafish model for tuberculosis. In 2014, she moved to the University of Cambridge and her laboratory continues to study TB pathogenesis. Professor Ramakrishnan has received several awards and honours, including the NIH Director's Pioneer Award and the Wellcome Trust Principal Research Fellowship. She is a member of the US National Academy of Sciences and EMBO and a Fellow of the Royal Society and Academy of Medical Sciences.

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