

Professor Jo Tarr

The GW4 INSPIRE team, past and present, are devastated by the dreadfully sad news of Professor Jo Tarr's passing and would like the INSPIRE community to remember Jo. INSPIRE continues to be a really important initiative which has seeded many students onto the path of research. We have been acknowledged as having one of the biggest and most integrated offerings nationally and this has been achieved through close cross-institutional working with academics. Jo was a truly fantastic person to work with and has inspired huge numbers of vet, medical and dental students to consider a career in research.

As Liz Coultard says: "Jo was highly skilled, dedicated and self-effacing – a pleasure to work with." Jo was an integral part of the early INSPIRE programme (as far back as 2014), and remained involved to this year, and we remember her collegiality and friendly approach.

Linda Wooldridge says: "I had the pleasure of working with Jo for the last 8 years.She was an extremely lovely person to work with so will be greatly missed."

Before INSPIRE was established, when Plymouth and Exeter universities were part of the same medical school, Jo and David Parkinson would end up on early morning bus rides with students heading off to conferences to give students a chance to present their research work, or visits to pharma companies to learn about drug development; things the students would not have done if Jo had not taken the time to help organise these things.

David says: "Jo was a friend and a very valued colleague for many years. Jo was always warm, kind and generous with her time to all of us and her students. It's very difficult to adjust to the idea that she will not be part of all this in the future. She will be much missed by all who knew her."

Tony Pickering says: "I knew Jo from my time as the Bristol co-lead for the INSPIRE program. Jo's contribution to the INSPIRE program from the outset was huge and very important. She was generous, grounded, supportive, encouraging and kind to her students and colleagues alike. I was very fortunate to have benefitted from her efforts during our time as leads of INSPIRE."

Jo Tarr, along with Tamsin Ford, took the initiative for Exeter and Jo was a strong advocate and industrious supporter of the INSPIRE scheme (which was impressive as she was not medically trained, but had an excellent appreciation of their challenges, motivations and needs).

Jo for many years undertook the Herculean task of matching the students from all four universities with their choices of research taster days across the South West and then encouraged them to develop proposals for summer projects. She also played substantial roles in launching the INSPIRE research journal and in organising the excellent INSPIRE national conferences, where students from all over the country attended our meetings in the South West.



This included the 2020 conference which took place just before the COVID-19 pandemic fully hit the UK. This contribution has also been recognised by the Academy of Medical Sciences who have repeatedly funded our scheme to the max and Jo rightly claims credit for the Exeter share of this funding.

Richard Coward says: "Jo was a lovely, kind, considerate and beautiful person to know and work with. I am so sorry that she has gone and she will be hugely missed."

As Vehid Salih says on behalf of us all: "It was a pleasure working with her and she will be missed by many colleagues. May she rest in peace."

On behalf of the INSPIRE team past and present

University of Exeter: Dr Jane Smith

University of Plymouth: Dr Vehid Salih, Prof David Parkinson

University of Bristol: Prof Richard Coward, Prof Tony Pickering, Dr Elizabeth Coultard, Dr Becky Foster, Dr Anu Goenka, Dr Mark Gormley, Prof Linda Wooldridge, Mrs Marie Burgess, Ms Michelle Harris

Cardiff University: Prof Colin Dayan, Dr William Davies, Dr Emma Tallentyre, Dr Heather Lundbeck