Pioneering women in life sciences

A tiny selection of remarkable researchers and their transformative achievements to encourage women throughout STEM careers

Jennifer Doudna
(1964-present)
Charpentier and Doudna’s Nobel Prize is the first science Nobel ever won by two women alone.

Jane Cooke Wright
(1919–2013)
Cooke was the only woman among 7 physicians to found the American Society of Clinical Oncology in 1964. In 1971, she was the first woman elected president of the New York Cancer Society.

Tu Youyou
(1930-present)
The Traditional Chinese medicine expert and pharmaceutical chemist Tu Youyou’s herbal discovery is the first Chinese woman to ever win a Nobel Prize.

Rita Colwell
(1934-present)
A champion for women and minorities in science. She’s credited for doubling the funding to an initiative that supports women in academic science and engineering careers.

Gertrude B. Elion
(1918–1999)
Most known for creating the lifesaving AIDS drug AZT, but she also developed other effective antivirals, anti-cancer drugs and immunosuppressives that are used to fight rejection of organ transplants. Her new technique using a method coined ‘rational drug design’ led to her winning the Nobel Prize in 1988.

Katalin Karikó
(1955-present)
For substantial contributions to the therapeutic use of mRNA and the development of COVID-19 vaccines, she has won more than a dozen prestigious science awards and named Time Magazine’s Hero of the Year.