

# COFFEE & CATCH-UP

World-leading scientist, Professor Tom Solomon CBE is a doctor, researcher and Director of the Pandemic Institute at the University of Liverpool. He was awarded a CBE in June 2021 for his work on emerging infections. He is an award-winning science communicator and has won two Guinness World Records. He is performing his show 'Covid for Kids' at this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe.



**INTERVIEW BY CAROLINE RAINEY**

**Describe yourself in five words.**

Doctor, Scientist, Teacher, Science Communicator, Runner (that's six words!)

**You were awarded a CBE in June 2021 for your work on emerging infections. What did your research involve?**

Since 2014 I have led the UK's Emerging Infections Research Unit in Liverpool, which was heavily involved in the UK response to Ebola, Zika and Covid. From Liverpool we led the national study of hospitalised patients with Covid, which fed information every week into SAGE, the government advisory committee. I am a neurologist (a brain doctor) and so my own research showed how Covid can affect the brain, and what we might do to combat this.



**How would you describe the impact of the last two years on children and the long-term effects from Covid-19 and lockdowns?**

The biggest impact on children has not been the disease itself (it is very mild in most children) but the effect of all the social restrictions, schools closing, inability to see grandparents and play with friends.

**Are you excited about performing at Edinburgh Festival Fringe this year? What is the main message from your show?**

I am really excited about coming to the Fringe. I think it is going to be a fantastic festival and demonstrates that we really are over the worst of the pandemic. My show helps children understand why the pandemic happened and

how we brought it under control, thanks to some science superheroes. It is a lot of fun; we have children on stage acting as bats and dressing up as bogeys. But I am also hoping it will inspire the next generation of super scientists.

**I AM HOPING IT WILL INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF SUPER SCIENTISTS**

**You performed at the festival in 2017 with your show Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine, which ended up at Leicester Square. Tell us about that experience.**

I had a super time performing Roald Dahl's Marvellous Medicine. It was my first foray into the world of theatre as a way of conveying science messages and I found it great fun. The whole run at Edinburgh sold out, we did extra shows, e.g. for the BBC Big Tent, and then took it around the country. As a doctor and researcher, I never expected to

be performing a one-man show in Leicester Square (that sold out too). But at that point I thought I'd better get back to the day job, and returned to the labs in Liverpool.

**How important is it to you to bring science and health to children in this way?**

I think theatre is a great way to introduce children (and their parents) to science. If people are being entertained, they are paying attention. And if they are paying attention, then they are learning. Sometimes I think science lessons in school can be a bit drab. But if you have a child on stage dressed as a giant coronavirus being chased by other children dressed as antibodies, then everyone is going to remember that!

*'Covid for Kids' is at Pleasance Courtyard, Edinburgh from Wednesday 3rd to Tuesday 16th August. For tickets, visit [www.pleasance.co.uk](http://www.pleasance.co.uk) or call 0131 7609 1800. You can follow Professor Solomon on Instagram @RunningMadProf*

**Leckie**  
the education publisher  
for Scotland

## Support what your child is learning at home

only  
£5.99



English and Maths Primary workbooks for ages 5-12

[www.leckiescotland.co.uk/primarysuccess](http://www.leckiescotland.co.uk/primarysuccess)