

Meet Dr. Isaac Choi, Thieme Chemistry Journals Awardee 2026!



Dr. Isaac Choi earned his PhD in 2021 from Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany), then carried out postdoctoral research at University of Wisconsin – Madison (USA). Since 2022, he is an assistant professor at Chungbuk National University (Republic of Korea).

Thieme: Which field of organic chemistry are you interested in the most and why?

Dr. Choi: I am primarily interested in developing new methodologies in organic synthesis and elucidating their modes of action. Through such efforts, I believe that organic synthesis can be approached not merely as a technical discipline, but rather as a scientific endeavor that can be understood and advanced on a fundamental level.

Thieme: Following that, what is the focus of your current research activity?

Dr. Choi: Currently, I am working on the development of organic synthetic methodologies based on electrochemistry, with the aim of proposing more sustainable synthetic strategies and delineating the detailed mechanisms of the organic reactions. Furthermore, I have a strong interest in the scale-up of these processes using flow chemistry.

Thieme: What do you think about the modern role and prospects of organic chemistry?

Dr. Choi: From my perspective, the modern landscape of organic chemistry can be characterized by three key terms: sustainability, data, and insight. The increasing demand for sustainability is fundamentally reshaping the direction of synthetic strategies and reaction design toward more efficient and effective processes. In parallel, data-driven approaches require a more precise understanding of reaction systems and are gradually extending toward predictive capabilities. Nevertheless, despite these developments, the process of defining meaningful research directions and formulating important scientific questions still relies heavily on the intuition and experience of researchers, that is, the human factor.

Thieme: Which difficulties are there for young upcoming chemists in your field? Do you have any tips?

Dr. Choi: It seems that the gap between the world of research and that outside of it is becoming increasingly pronounced. While modern environments are accustomed to rapid stimuli and instant rewards, research inherently requires patience and repeated trial and error. In this sense, research may appear rather inefficient by today's standards. Nevertheless, enduring this process often leads, albeit somewhat belatedly, to a sense of achievement and, ultimately, catharsis.

Thieme: What is your most important scientific achievement to date and why?

Dr. Choi: To be honest, I find it difficult to single out one specific event or publication as my most important achievement, as I do not consider myself to have made a substantial contribution to the organic chemistry community yet. Nevertheless, if I were to mention a particularly memorable moment, it would be my very first experiment as an undergraduate intern. The reaction I performed was a Mitsunobu reaction, which, as is well known, proceeded smoothly and allowed me to obtain a white solid product. This experience marked my first encounter with chemistry beyond paper, that is, chemistry in my own hands, and it became the starting point of my continued interest in the field.

Thieme: Could you tell us something about yourself outside the lab, such as your hobbies or extra-work interests?

Dr. Choi: I try to maintain a good balance between research and family life. In the past, I enjoyed various sports including football, whereas these days I make time for swimming or working out when possible. In addition, I enjoy visiting saunas and spas.