

Meet Dr. Giacomo E. M. Crisenza, Thieme Chemistry Journals Awardee 2026!



Dr. Giacomo E. M. Crisenza undertook PhD studies at the University of Bristol (UK), and in 2017 was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship to conduct postdoctoral research at ICIQ (Tarragona, Spain). In 2020, he moved back to the UK to join the University of Manchester as a lecturer in organic chemistry. Two years later, he started his independent career at Manchester as a lecturer in catalysis.

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

Dr. Crisenza: I am most interested in synthetic catalytic methodologies that exploit radical reactivity. What fascinates me about radicals and single-electron transfer processes is their ability to generate reaction intermediates that cannot be accessed through conventional two-electron pathways. This opens the door to transformations that are simply not achievable using traditional polar chemistry. At the same time, I have always been intrigued by the wealth of “hidden gem” radical reactions buried in the older literature. With modern tools and technologies, we now have the opportunity to revisit and reimagine these transformations, turning overlooked ideas into powerful new methodologies for synthesis.

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

Dr. Crisenza: Our team’s research focuses on developing sustainable catalytic technologies, leveraging radical reactivity, for the valorization of carbon feedstocks, raw materials, and biomass. The overarching goal is to enable greener routes to high-value molecules for applications in health-care, medicine, and agriculture. To harness radical reactivity, my focus has transitioned from metal catalysis to photocatalysis and, more recently, to electrosynthesis...let’s see what comes next! I became interested in synthetic electrochemistry because I see it as one of the cleanest ways to give, or take, an electron from an organic molecule, without the need for additional catalysts or reagents. Here, electrons themselves are the catalyst!

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

Dr. Crisenza: Society relies on chemical synthesis and manufacturing to produce our everyday chemicals – from medicines and healthcare products to agrochemicals and advanced materials. In this context, organic chemists should continue to push the boundaries of synthesis by developing new reactions, processes, and transformations that enable access to previously unattainable molecules – whose immediate utility may not always be evident, but which could hold significant potential for future applications. At the same time, there should be a clear drive to make the production of fine chemicals and essential products more efficient, accessible and – above all – more sustainable. To this end, we must balance the pursuit of fundamental discovery with the responsibility to minimize the environmental impact of chemical manufacturing. Achieving this goal involves not only designing greener processes, but also addressing past shortcomings by recycling waste streams and byproducts, and developing effective strategies to degrade harmful pollutants.

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

Dr. Crisenza: In organic synthesis – as is generally the case in academia – I believe that the most significant challenge for early-career researchers is the high level of competition. It is both inspiring and daunting to realize that, at this level, being a “smart kid” is the minimum buy-in to play the game, and that you must continually develop stronger ideas to compete with both emerging academics at your own career level and more established scientists. My main advice would be to seek out less-explored angles, emerging lines of research and (sub)fields where there is greater scope to contribute with something distinctive. This can help your work stand out as recognisably “yours” within the community.

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

Dr. Crisenza: I would not single out one achievement, as I am very proud of all my scientific contributions. I also believe that the true value of a discovery often becomes clearer, or grows in significance, long after it has been communicated or published. What I value most, perhaps, has been my ability to adapt to different areas within organic synthesis and to develop expertise in new fields at every stage of my career. I believe this has helped me broaden my perspective and continually renew my skills and interests.

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

Dr. Crisenza: Outside of work, I enjoy hiking, a good night out with friends, travelling the world with my partner Cristina, and cooking – which is actually my only way of channeling my inner synthetic chemist now that I no longer have a fume hood in the lab. I used to play basketball and five-a-side football, but as I approach 40, contact sports feel a bit too reckless. These days, I prefer swimming and playing padel – where there is a net safely separating me from my opponents. I am also an avid Inter Milan fan and enjoy watching Serie A matches while commenting them live on WhatsApp with lifelong friends from my hometown in Italy: the banter has not changed since our secondary school days.