

Development of differential diagnostic tests for medically significant Flaviviruses

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Who knew that sacrificing a summer semester's worth of working and earning is... working and learning, because I decided not to look for a job but work in the virology lab instead. The vacation project was an opportunity for me to define my Science major, and whether I wanted to complete my honours year after my degree or not. My supervisors were extremely supportive of my transition into the lab, and it was then that I applied for the AB-CRC Vacation Scholarship and it changed my holidays in more ways than one.

My project focused on flaviviruses and the monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) that were able to detect the specific virus, either Japanese encephalitis, Murray Valley encephalitis or Kunjin virus. I had the opportunity to perfect my enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) to test the reactivity of the mAbs, and then immunoblotting to establish what protein the mAbs bind to. After my project wrapped up, I realised that I was quite attached to the lab and staff members, so I immediately volunteered to work on some mosquito grinding to isolate any viruses that may be present (and the picture below is proof that I did do some serious work over the summer!). The people that I met during my time in the lab were extremely rewarding, because this course allowed me to get to know staff and lecturers on a more personal level that no other courses I have ever attended could really offer.

Completing this project made me realise that the amount of work that goes behind being an honours student, accomplishing a PhD thesis and publishing a paper must be seen to be believed. But now that I know what is coming, I wouldn't mind doing all of that sometime in the future (preferably in that order too).

