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Media Statement

HANDS-ON FIELD TRIP FOR MURDOCH STUDENTS

Teaming up to nurture tomorrow's medical research stars, Murdoch University and the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) has given 60 WA Science and Engineering Summer School students a behind-the-scenes look at the making of cutting-edge health discoveries.

The group of budding scientists and engineers took a tour around one of Western Australia's premier adult medical research laboratories in Nedlands, guided by WA's 2009 and 2007 Young Scientists of the Year.

WAIMR's Dr Kristen Nowak, the 2007 recipient of the award, gave the students a personal perspective on the rewards that flow from a medical research career.

"The students were eager to hear about what it's like to be a researcher, the day-to-day tasks and what it's like to make a significant difference to patients suffering from the diseases you study – but they were even keener to get involved in the hands-on side of science and learn about the equipment," she said.

"We suited up the students in white coats and took them into our labs where they got the chance to check out some of the latest genetic research technology and analyse DNA and it was great to see their enthusiasm as its critical WA keeps attracting some of the State's finest minds into science and medical research."

2009 WA Young Scientist of the Year, Dr Kevin Pflieger explained to the students how innovative technology developed during medical research can benefit many other areas of science and medicine by being commercialized in world-leading companies.

Coordinating the visit, Murdoch University senior lecturer in mathematics and statistics Jen Bradley said the aim of the tour was to provide students with an insight into a broad range of science and engineering careers.

"We arrange field trips for our students in each of the three basic sciences studied at our schools – biology, chemistry and physics – so they can see how science is used in the workplace," she said.

"WAIMR was an ideal choice for a tour because many students express interest in careers in medicine or medical science, so we want to show them the diversity within this field and the options available to them."

WAIMR director Professor Peter Klinken said it was a strong philosophy of the Institute to nurture budding careers in medical research.

"For us it's a great opportunity to have young scientists and engineers visit our labs, because the next medical research stars are likely to be amongst them," he said.

"We hope the students took away an inspired view of the rewards of medical research and hope it has helped to refine their own career goals and aspirations."

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