

The Scientists

Stan Mitew  download



What interested you in science as a child?

My fascination with science, and the brain in particular began about 15 years ago when I was in first grade and our teacher showed us a 'magic' invisibility trick (actually utilizing the blind spot in the eye). It awakened in me a sense of curiosity about the great mysteries of the brain. It is not a very well understood organ and even today, there are constantly new discoveries about it being made. Growing up on a farm also helped a lot as I had free reign to conduct 'experiments' (sometimes annoying my grandparents) and was surrounded by animals and nature. I knew I wanted to be a scientist and solve future problems.

What did you like about studying in university?

When I started university at UTAS, the Medical Research degree was offered for the first time and I just knew it was made for me. It offered a broad selection of both medical and general science subjects that provided a good background for a career in research. My favourite subjects were invariably those that dealt with neuroscience, psychology and pathology as I felt I could combine all of these three areas of interest into my research goals. What I liked about the degree structure was that at the start, you are given a general selection of units in a particular field (eg. Science), which then get progressively more specialized, giving you the option to sample different areas of interest before you commit to one.

What are you doing now in your current research?

And why is it important? I am currently completing my Honours Degree in Medical Research at the Menzies Research Institute. My project aims to study the effects of Alzheimer's disease, a very serious condition that progressively kills cells in the brain, on different types of brain cells (neurons). There is a possibility that Alzheimer's disease is selective in which neurons it kills and that not all neurons are equally affected. By looking at which cells are less vulnerable, I hope to study the factors that mediate resistance to the disease. With the aging population that most developed nations are facing, the incidence of dementia and other age-related neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease is going to increase. Currently, there is no effective treatment for it, therefore research into new therapeutics is crucial.

What do you want to do in the future?

I hope to finish my Honours project at the end of this year and continue with a PhD next year. At some point, I hope to work in a major research laboratory, either in Australia or in the USA. Eventually, I would also like to get a postgraduate medical degree in Neurosurgery and use my experience as a medical researcher to help better understand the neurodegenerative disorders and how to treat them. I feel that as a scientific field, Neuroscience is still very young and there are plenty of discoveries to be made, making for a very challenging and dynamic area to study. But most of all, I think it's fun!