

national science week 2013

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Conducting research into the functioning of the human body requires tools and equipment especially suited to the job. Just like a carpenter, plumber or an electrician, researchers have a special and unique set of tools and methods to help investigate things that matter in human health.

One of the most interesting and important tools that researchers have at their disposal is a machine that allows us to specifically 'tag' parts of human cells, such as cancer cells, with a fluorescent molecule (just like the ones that were used to create the glow in the dark dog!). This helps us to identify a single cell out of the thousands of other cell types in our bodies.

My research in neuroscience uses this 'tool of the trade' to help me see the cells that are affected in motor neuron disease. This means that I can look at motor neuron cells during the disease and see at what point they start to look sick, or to see if a particular drug is starting to work.

I like to do things that are difficult and challenging because they keep me interested. This is why I decided to do a Bachelor of Medical Research, focussing mainly on chemistry and human biology classes. In third year I took a neuroscience class and met the amazing Dickson Research group at the Menzies Institute and discovered all of the fantastic research that they are doing. I joined this group for my honours year and have now just begun my PhD and am really looking forward to working on this project for the next three years.

In the back of my mind I always know that there is a lot of responsibility in this job. A lot of money is spent so that scientists can research human diseases and possible treatments and the goal is always to find ways to help people and to improve their lives. Appreciating this fact is the driving force that makes me try my hardest to do good research and to get good results. It is so rewarding knowing that I am working to really help people that I don't even know or may never meet.

For more information: www.menzies.utas.edu.au

