

Thitima Urathamakul

Thitima loves the challenge of research work and has always felt an attraction towards studying Chemistry. Originally from Thailand, she spent three years at school in New Zealand before commencing her undergraduate studies at the University of Wollongong. Now she has most completed her doctorate



Where did you go to school?

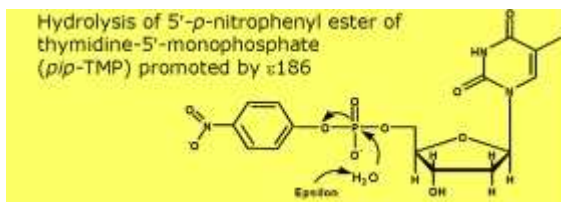
I went to Hamilton Girls' High School in New Zealand and studied Mathematics (Calculus and Statistics), Chemistry, Biology and Physics.

Why did you choose to study Chemistry?

Chemistry and I seem to click. I did all three sciences but I enjoyed chemistry the most and it turned out to be my best subject. So I suppose it made sense to pursue this particular stream of science.

What are you currently doing?

I am in the final stage of writing up my PhD thesis.



Who is funding you?

I would not have been able to afford to undertake Postgraduate studies if the University of Wollongong had not provided me with a Fee Waiver scholarship, as I was first enrolled as an international student. In addition, I am also very lucky to have such great supervisors (Dr Jennifer Beck, Dr. Stephen Ralph and Prof. Margaret Sheil) as they provided me with a scholarship for living allowances.

What are you trying to achieve?

One part of my project is to study proteins involved in the replication of bacteria chromosome. This may lead to the development of new antibiotics. Another part is to study interactions of ruthenium-based anticancer drugs with DNA. The main technique used in my work is electrospray ionisation mass spectrometry.



Low-temperature electron micrograph of a cluster of E. coli bacteria, magnified 10,000 times. Each individual bacterium is oblong shaped.
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escherichia_coli>
[accessed 21/8/06]

Why is it exciting?

It is DEFINITELY very exciting and motivating at the same time because all the information and data that we obtain can contribute to the development of new antibiotics and/or anti-cancer drugs, which could save lives. It is also very cool to have access to the mass spectrometer – there are only 3 such instruments in the world!



What are you enjoying most about it?

I like being challenged and as you know experiments don't always work as you hope so you have to keep trying and coming up with different ideas until they work. Once you have figured that out the sense of satisfaction and achievement make all the effort worthwhile.

What has been the best moment so far?

I am attending the International Mass Spectrometry Conference in Prague in early September. This will be an awesome experience for me since I have never been to Europe before and I have heard from so many people that it is beautiful and the beer is very good over there.



Prague: Location of 17th International Mass Spectrometry Conference 2006

Why would you encourage other to get involved in science and research?

You will be able to put your ideas to test and you never know, you might be the one who saves the world!

Where to next?

When I finish writing up, I will be working for my supervisors for a year. Then I would like to further my postdoctoral research overseas for a few years before returning back to Australia.