

SAMRC'S JOB SHADOW PROGRAMME

Five Ridge Park College learners, Zoë Rajkoomar, Hafsa Mansab, Awande Hadebe, Hannah Essa and Arooj Latif were granted the opportunity to participate in the SAMRC's Job Shadow Programme - Generation Science (Gen S) which took place from 1 July to 3 July 2024. The programme allows students from Grades 11 and 12 to visit the organisation and gain a deeper understanding of the work they do and how they aim to make a difference in affecting the health of all South Africans for the better.

Upon arrival we were met with discussions and presentations by a range of expert SAMRC employees. Knowledgeable advice and information about the career pathways as a pharmacist, social scientist, paediatrician and biostatistician were provided to us. This included their holistic journey from entrance into university to graduating and employment and what their field of work entails, which was immensely enlightening and inspiring to us.

On the 2nd July, we were fortunate to be given the privilege of touring the Africa Health Research Institute (AHRI) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal - Nelson R. Mandela School of Medicine. We were guided to several different laboratories where we engaged with the AHRI staff and discussed career options. We were introduced to biomedical sciences, genetics, microbiology and biochemistry amongst other careers which broadened our horizons regarding scientific fields of study. One of the highlights of the visits to the laboratories was the hands-on session where we were allowed to experience the work that they conducted. We practiced pipetting small volumes of liquids, learning how to avoid common errors and cross contamination. This practical experience was invaluable, giving us a deeper understanding of the skills required for laboratory work.



On 3 July 2024, we spent time at the HIV and Other Infectious Diseases Research Unit (HIDRU) where we got to explore the clinical research sites and view the numerous elements of the sites including data management, laboratory systems and pharmacy. We observed the process of how clinical trials are conducted, the way information is stored, the different tests that occur as well as the machinery used to test samples. It was a unique encounter that gave us an exceptional idea of the medical research career options which are available and that make a significant contribution to saving lives and preventing the spread of diseases.

Overall, this was an informative experience which inspired us to further explore the various fields in science and consider the potential contributions we could make to advancing human health. Gen S is a thriving initiative that successfully educated us about science while inspiring the younger generation towards future careers in Health Science. We were honoured and abundantly grateful to be given the opportunity to participate in this programme.