

Masterclass 'Being a drug designer for two days'

Alex Brugman DP1

In March I attended the masterclass 'Being a drug designer for two days', organised by the College of Pharmaceutical Sciences (CPS) at Utrecht University. CPS offers a BSc course in drug development (taught in English) and the masterclass is basically a two day taster course. The programme included: Lab work, a presentation by a researcher and solving problems to do with antibiotic resistance. The event also included an overnight stay at a hostel in Bunnik, close to Utrecht.

Day 1

When we arrived we were given some time to get to know each other. After that we dove straight into a group assignment to solve the problem of bacteria being resistant to the antibiotic Chloramphenicol. We were given about 45 minutes to research on the internet and come up with our solutions, presented on a poster which we then presented to the group.

Then we made our way over to the lab, where we first did two little experiments with bacteria. The first experiment was for testing transmission of bacteria onto hands. The second experiment was to test how effective 70% alcohol is in disinfecting.



The main lab work was making our own compound from the antibiotic Chloramphenicol. This compound was supposed to be different from Chloramphenicol in that all the bacteria tested should be sensitive to it.

Making this compound was a slightly lengthy complicated process. We got help with this from some second year CPS students. The students not only helped us but also gave their opinion on the CPS university course and told us about their life at the university.

After leaving our bacteria in the incubator to see to the next day, we made our way, on foot, 30 minutes to the hostel where we would be staying in, dropped off our bags and continued straight to dinner at the 'Pannenkoekenhuis'. We then all went back to the hostel, had a drink at the bar and talked some more before bed.

Day 2

We woke up at 7.30am to have breakfast at the hostel and at 9.30am we were off again to the University campus for the second day.

We went back to the lab first to view the results of bacteria on the plates and discuss the results together. We then had a tour of the university labs with a third year CPS student. It was interesting to see where the students all worked and to get their perspective on the course.

A researcher from the university then came to talk to us about research in general, the field of research and what it has done for our world. It was really interesting to know the bigger picture and how you could benefit the world greatly by being a researcher and innovating new drugs. It also gave us a glimpse of what we could be doing in the future if we chose to do CPS, or in fact any other Pharmacology course at university.

The programme ended with a quiz and handing out certificates of attendance. Then it was time to say goodbye to each other and go home after a very insightful and interesting two days.