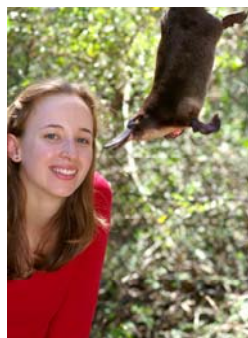


Platypus venom to go under the microscope of Fulbright scholar

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Camilla Whittington, a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Veterinary Science, will study at the Washington University Genome Sequencing Centre (GSC) for a year thanks to a Fulbright Postgraduate Scholarship. While at Washington University, Whittington will study the genetic components of mammal venom.

"I will use this opportunity to build an understanding of the toxins from two venomous mammals, the platypus and a shrew," the Fulbright scholar said.

As quantities of mammalian venom available for study are extremely limited, Camilla will work on the genes that code for the venom proteins.

"This will allow the identification of toxins expressed in the venom gland, and will provide insights into the basic biology of these animals, as well as the evolution of mammalian venom."

Camilla said that this work will not only extend the scientific knowledge of the venom, it could eventually lead to the development of new compounds for medicines.

"Considering the large number of pharmacologically useful compounds that have been discovered in snake venom, it seems likely that this will also be the case with mammalian venom."

Camilla said that she applied to visit the Washington University Genome Sequencing Centre as its researchers are working at the cutting edge and it has equipment and expertise that are not available in Australia.

Camilla has a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from The University of Sydney, with Honours in Molecular Biology and the University Medal. She has also won several awards, including an Australian Postgraduate Award and the Mayo prize for best student presentation at the 2008 Genetics Society of Australasia conference.

Upon her return to Australia, Camilla will build on the research collaboration with the U.S. and carry out further studies of the new venom compounds identified.

The prestigious Fulbright program is the largest educational scholarship of its kind, created by U.S. Senator J. William Fulbright and the U.S. Government in 1946. Aimed at promoting mutual understanding through educational exchange, it operates between the U.S. and 150 countries. In Australia, the scholarships are funded by the Australian and U.S. Governments and corporate partners and administered by the Australian-American Fulbright Commission in Canberra.

Camilla is one of 22 talented Australians to be recognised as a Fulbright Scholar in 2009. [Applications for Fulbright Scholarships](#) in 2010 open on 1 June.

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