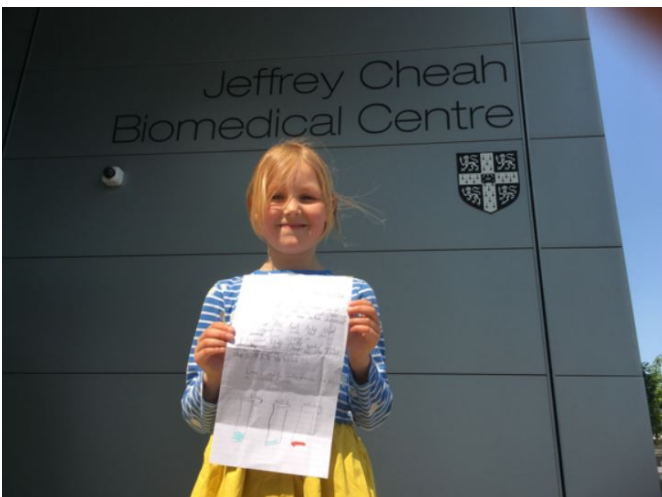


Scientists at Cambridge University and Addenbrooke's hospital aim to inspire next generation

24 June 2020

But scientists from the University of Cambridge who are working with colleagues at the hospital to help fight Covid-19 were so impressed with Molly's letter that they invited her in.



Molly, who signed herself "Molly who wants to be a microbiologist", had suggested that an antibody for Covid-19 could be found by getting patients to spit in test tubes and identify what was different to the spit from a non-Covid patient.

Professor Ian Goodfellow, Deputy Head of the Department of Pathology at Cambridge University, wrote back to her: "Your idea is great. People generate antibodies to Covid when they are infected, and if we can find those antibodies then we can understand how they kill Covid, and maybe even understand how to stop us getting infected in the first place."

Whilst Molly was unable to come into Addenbrooke's itself because of infection control measures in place at the hospital, it was safe for her to visit the neighbouring Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre where university microbiologists are working hard to help doctors treat Covid-19.

Arriving with her dad Nick, Molly was welcomed by virologist Dr Myra Hosmillo. Myra explained how scientists search for antibodies in patients' blood by demonstrating how iron filings stick to plastic models like antibodies stick to pathogens in the body.

Molly was then invited into a lab run by Professor Stephen Baker in the Cambridge Institute of Therapeutic Immunology and Infectious Disease. A leading molecular microbiologist, Steve runs an infectious disease laboratory trying to work out how to better measure, control, and treat infections that are common in developing countries. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, his team have solely been working on fighting this infection.

Steve was delighted to be able to share his passion for microbiology with Molly: "Part of our job in science is to inspire the next generation and communicate what we do to a broader audience. Hopefully, during our careers we can find people that will go on and do something groundbreaking; we need to provide that spark to get people interested in science."

Molly was able to carry out some safe "mock" experiments in an unused part of the lab, just as if she were a microbiologist testing for positive Covid-19 samples. She said: "It was amazing! I definitely want to be a microbiologist because it is very interesting and I want to help people".

