Youth Research Programme launched to get students keen on biomedical sciences
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Start them young and get them excited about research.

That's what the biomedical sciences sector has been trying to do in its quest to get more talent.

Joining this quest - the Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology - which recently gave students as young as 14 a closer look into the research life and launched its Youth Research Programme.

White coats, freezing laboratories and days spent poring over microscopes.

A typical researcher's life, right? Wrong, say scientists from the institute who showed 30 students from Raffles Girls and Raffles Institution how life in research could be exciting.

First though - the safety talk on what can and cannot be done in laboratories.

No small matter, bearing in mind recent laboratory lapses that led to the last Sars case.

And then it was off for some serious hands-on experimenting as the students poked and pored over the samples.

"It's not difficult to get their attention. The difficult thing is to listen to them, and to respond rather than to spoonfeed," said Dr Victor Samper, Principal Research Scientist at the Institute.

But more importantly, what did the students think?

"This is really different. When you are cooped up here and you explore the undiscovered," said a student.

Another added: "If you are a doctor and the person is sick, I give him medicine. If I am a lawyer, I use this and that tactic, but in research, you don't know where you are going to be in 20 years, that's intriguing."

Said a third student: "The information is rather complex but when you sort of understand the meaning, it's quite nice."

The programme for these Secondary 2 students was just for two afternoons, but there's more.

In many ways, this pilot project is an experiment in itself.

After this, the Institute hopes to bring in older students from Secondary 4 and the JCs for a month-long project.

And after that, teachers for another month, who’ll be taught fun experiments that they can then take back to the schools.