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Prize-winner on track for a future in water

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Anna Wilson

Finding quicker ways to detect the parasitic protozoan *Cryptosporidium* in water has won the annual Hodgson Medal for Flinders biotechnology Honours student Anna Wilson.

Ms Wilson, whose Honours project is being co-supervised by Dr Fiona Young at Flinders and Dr Paul Monis and Dr Brendon King at SA Water, was awarded the undergraduate student prize for excellence in water research at the recent annual [Australian Water Association SA Branch Water Awards](#).

Cryptosporidium, which can cause gastric disorders and diarrhoea, occurs in rivers and creeks, particularly after rainfall. With two of the protozoan's 26 species responsible for causing 90 per cent of human infections, prompt species identification is vital for protecting public health.

Working in the laboratories of [SA Water](#) in Adelaide, Ms Wilson improved existing tests and also developed a new assay. The testing techniques employ PCR, a molecular DNA-based technology that allows the detection of the presence of *Cryptosporidium* in samples of water.

Winning the Hodgson Medal means Ms Wilson's paper is eligible to be presented for the AWA's national undergraduate award early in 2014.

On top of her prize, Ms Wilson has also won a Graduate Placement with SA Water, securing one of a handful of positions which this year had more than 600 applicants.

The two-year graduate program gives graduates the chance to undertake six to twelve month rotations throughout the business, providing opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in their areas of interest.

"I might rotate through areas ranging from wastewater work through to policy and public consultation," Ms Wilson said.

Dr Fiona Young said that the Graduate Placements often led to employment and careers in the water industry. She said students of the biotechnology program at Flinders had secured traineeships with SA Water on three occasions in the last four years.

"Given that many of these positions go to engineers and other professions associated with water management, this is an excellent outcome for young scientists who have trained in the Flinders biotechnology program," Dr Young said.



Tags: [Australian Water Association SA Branch](#), [biotechnology](#), [Cryptosporidium](#), [Dr Fiona Young](#), [Faculty of Medicine Nursing and Health Sciences](#), [SA Water](#), [School of Medicine](#), [water](#), [water research](#)

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