

Student at cutting edge Jamie First

James Barnes isn't your typical 22-year-old.

While most people his age spend their end-of-semester break backpacking, partying or sleeping in, this Monash University student opted for a white coat and some hard yakka instead.

The Balwyn resident was chosen to participate in the Cancer Council Victoria's annual Summer Vacation Studentship program.

"It's a rare opportunity to be able to contribute towards real-world research while an undergraduate," Mr Barnes, who is studying a Bachelor of Science, said.

The third year student said helping out at the Prostate Cancer Research Group during December and earning \$300 a week helped develop his interest in the area.

"It's given me some really valuable insight as to what it's like to work as a research scientist professionally.

"I hoped to learn new techniques in the lab, as well as get a better understanding of how research is coordinated ... so I think it's been very successful ... enjoyable and worthwhile ... and pretty fun and interesting."

Supervisor and research fellow Mitchell Lawrence said Mr Barnes contributed to some key areas of prostate cancer research during his four-week stint at the centre.

"Every patient's tumour is unique and behaves differently, and we're trying to understand the differences between those tumours and develop ways of identifying the most aggressive ones from those that are less aggressive," Mr Lawrence said.

"James is a talented student, so ... it was great to have him work in our lab ... and to train the next generation of cancer researchers."

Due to finish his degree this year, Mr Barnes said he planned to major in microbiology and human pathology.

"I'm keeping my options open. Continuing on in the world of research is definitely a possibility, but there are also other possibilities, such as working in diagnostics, which would mean working in a hospital laboratory or a private pathology laboratory."