

Visit to Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Srinagar – a report.

A visit to Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Srinagar Branch was organized by the Department of Biotechnology on 10 March 2016 for the students of Integrated B.Sc-M.Sc (Biotechnology and Zoology). It was organized to get students acquainted with the research going on at IIIM, interact with IIIM faculty & scholars and see the laboratories. Fortunately, on the same day, IIIM Srinagar was hosting Dr. Altaf Lal for an extension lecture. So our students also got a chance to hear his lecture and interact with him. Dr. Altaf Lal, US based-Kashmiri Scientist, former president FDA, Dr. Lal gave an inspirational and interactive lecture. He spoke about his experiences and his journey to the position which he is holding today. He advised students, 'discover yourself and then define your goal in life' and 'be who you are'. He advised students be inquisitive, ask questions and think beyond their text books. During his lecture, he also asked some students to tell about their goals in life, their experiences etc., According to him, the students here lack the ability to speak up or express themselves, so he advised students to be bold and express their thoughts and speak up yourselves. He suggested students to follow and make "giant charts" for their studies. His lecture was motivational for the students.

After Dr Lal's lecture, Dr Muzamil Ahmad, Scientist IIIM, welcomed the students to IIIM Srinagar. He advised students to aim high and about forming study groups for better, quick and interactive learning of science. Dr. Zahoor A Parray also interacted with students and told them some interesting facts about *M. tuberculosis*, the bacteria responsible for tuberculosis.

After this, the students, in groups, visited the various laboratories of IIIM. They went to plant molecular biology lab, microbiology lab, pharmacology lab and instrumentation centre. PhD scholars working in these labs told the students about the research problems or projects they are working on and the techniques they are using. During this, the students came across various instruments used in research like PCR machines, centrifuges, gel-doc, electrophoresis systems, deep freezers, HPLC, NMR, incubators etc. This was a unique and new experience for the students. After lab visits, the students were taken for the field visit to see various commercially and medicinally important plants being cultivated in the fields of IIIM. They came to know the lavender, rosemary and other plants and their use in medicines and cosmetics like oils, shampoos and the use of aromatic plants in perfume industry. The students also visited the chemistry lab of IIIM involved in drug discovery and extraction from natural resources. All the students were provided with light refreshment, tea and a *somaosa*.

All the students were happy and it was a good learning experience for all of them.

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