

## BU science students spearhead studies

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Brandon University students Riley Feser and Sachi Villanueva are each receiving \$12,000 this year through the Research Manitoba Master's Studentships program, which will help further the pair's research into breast cancer and micro plastic pollution, respectively.

According to a Thursday news release from BU, Feser is working under the supervision of Dr. Mousumi Majumder to analyze the proteins secreted from microRNAs found overexpressed in breast cancer cells, which promotes cancer metastasis in tumours.

By identifying the proteins responsible for these changes, Feser's research could assist in spotting breast cancer early as well as providing a target for treatment.

"By identifying breast cancer early through the blood, we can save patients' lives by developing an easier, less harmful detection method to combine with current therapies," he said. "This would also make testing at a younger age more accessible, as primary breast cancer screening starts at age 50, but incidences continue to rise in younger populations."

Meanwhile, Villanueva is looking at the effects of microplastics, or small plastic particles, on the biology of the small freshwater zebrafish, and if these effects are reversible.

"A better understanding on how these microplastics affect aquatic organisms is essential to assess the environmental impact of this pollution," she said.

Thursday's news releases went on to say that Feser and Villanueva are the first students in BU's Master of Science (Environmental and Life Studies) program to receive the awards through the Master's Studentships competition.

"It is a major accomplishment for our students and for our program to have two

award recipients," said Dr. Bernadette Ardelli, BU's dean of Science. "I congratulate Riley and Sachi as well as their supervisors on their efforts, and I'm excited to see what breakthroughs will come from this research."

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