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SIBLINGS' CHARITY SWIM

A group of seven siblings hailing from Perth's western suburbs have made it into the record books while swimming the English Channel for charity.

The Prendville family not only became the largest group of siblings to ever cross the Channel when they completed the 35 kilometre feat, they also became the latest supporters of WAIMR's Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre.

The family donated more than \$3500 to the Centre after raising money before they set off for the UK.



The Prendville Family

50-year-old Swanbourne GP Jamie Prendville said seven of the 11 children in the family decided to join in the swim.

"Because it was a pretty unique event, we decided to use it as a fundraiser for a significant cause and by unanimous decision we decided to dedicate the swim to Scott Kirkbride and donate any money we raised to the Centre set up in his honour," Dr Prendville said.

"A friend and patient of mine, Scott Kirkbride lost his life to melanoma late last year.

"The crux of the matter which cemented our commitment to melanoma research was that Scotty Kirkbride was a magnificent example of a 27-year-old Australian, who could easily have been a brother or son to anyone in our family team."

As well as Jamie, the Prendville family members to cross one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world were Mark, Michael, Garry, David, Patrick and their sister and Dalkeith mother-of-five Caroline.

WAIMR Director Peter Klinken thanked the family for their enormous effort.

"Our aim is that the money raised by the Prendville family's swim, and all other fundraising for the Centre, will help save lives," Professor Klinken said.



Dr Malcolm Lyons

WAIMR PROFILE

Malcolm Lyons is part of the team at WAIMR's recently-formed Diabetes Research Centre, which aims to pinpoint the genetic causes of diabetes.

Dr Lyons is focusing on identifying genes that may be linked to Type 1 (also known as juvenile diabetes) and Type 2 diabetes (often referred to as 'lifestyle' diabetes), which affect more than one million Australians.

"We know that the genes we inherit from our parents form one part of the puzzle as to why some people develop diabetes and some don't," he said.

"The big questions are, what and how many genes are responsible for that? Our work will hopefully lift the lid on that mystery and down the track help to tailor better treatments."

Professor Grant Morahan, a world expert in the genetics of diabetes, is the head of the Diabetes Research Centre, which is based at WAIMR's Perth Campus.

This exciting initiative is part of an excellent partnership with the Diabetes Research Foundation of WA.



COLLABORATION DELIVERS HOPE FOR CANCER PATIENTS

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) and the Cancer Council Western Australia have teamed up in a bid to deliver better treatments for local cancer patients.

WAIMR Director Peter Klinken said the \$600,000 Cancer Council Clinical Trials WA initiative, recently launched by Health Minister Jim McGinty, was an exciting partnership aimed at boosting participation in cancer clinical trials in Western Australia.

"Together, WAIMR and the Cancer Council will establish a centre to encourage more cancer patients to become involved in clinical trials that are linked to cutting edge research," said Professor Klinken.

"I'm delighted the Institute has been given the opportunity to be part of such an exciting initiative.

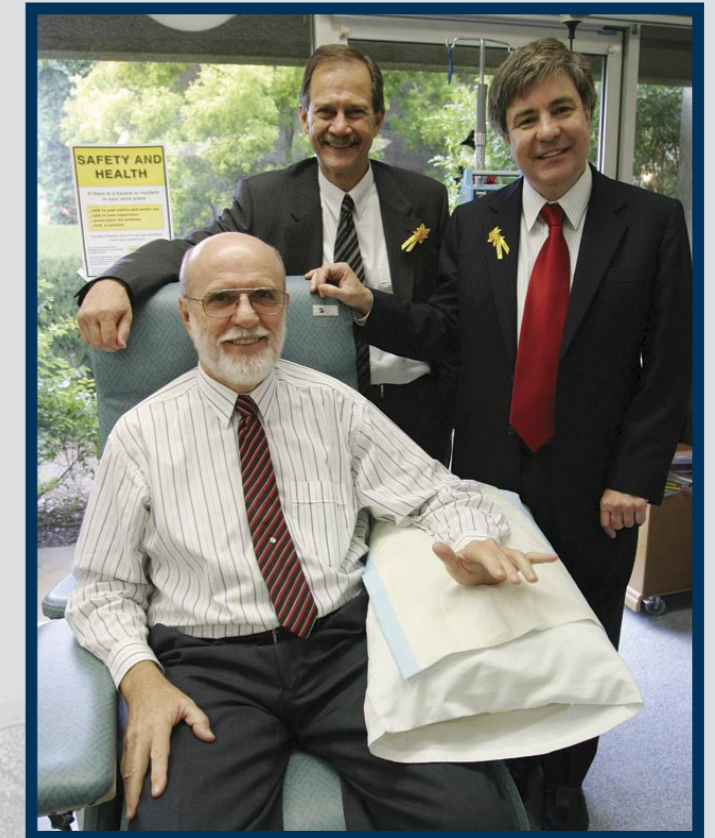
"We believe this project can make a real difference to cancer patients in WA by giving them greater access to clinical trials that have the potential to improve their treatment.

"WAIMR is very keen to promote clinical trials in WA as we know they play a crucial part in helping us convert our laboratory-based research discoveries into therapies that can be delivered to the bedsides of West Australians."

The Cancer Council's Professor of Clinical Cancer Research Michael Millward said the establishment of the centre was a significant step forward in cancer research in Western Australia.

"History has shown that clinical trials are the most effective way of improving treatment for cancer patients.

"We know that patients who enter clinical trials potentially have better survival and quality of life outcomes compared to patients who do not participate in trials. This means West Australian cancer patients have the potential to get direct personal benefit from being part of a clinical trial.



Professor Klinken & Professor Millward with cancer patient Robert Bergman (seated)

"Many patients also feel that by participating in a trial, they are able to help others in the future."

"On the medical side, the involvement of clinicians in clinical trials has a positive overall impact on treatment standards and approaches in the hospital or clinic where they practice," Professor Millward said.

It's estimated that fewer than 3% of cancer patients in WA are on clinical trials.

The new Cancer Council Clinical Trials centre aims to boost that to 10% or around 1,000 patients by 2010.

Cancer Council Clinical Trials WA will initially be situated at WAIMR Nedlands Campus in 'B' Block at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

WAIMR'S LEUKAEMIA BREAKTHROUGH

WAIMR researchers have further stepped up their investigations into a gene linked to acute myeloid leukaemia, after discovering the gene can work to make treatment of the cancer more difficult.

WAIMR Director Peter Klinken said his team found the gene, called MLF1, was responsible for changes in some leukaemic cells – changes which make the cells more resistant to chemotherapy treatment, and therefore harder to destroy.

"This information potentially gives us a new weapon to treat this form of leukaemia," Professor Klinken said.

"We're now investigating how we might be able to control this gene so that it can be "switched off" thereby stopping those cell changes from taking place.

"If we can do that, the hope is that the success rate in treating this type of cancer could increase significantly."

WAIMR researchers are working in collaboration with scientists in the US who are also looking at the role of MLF1.

DANIELLE RECEIVES RESEARCH AWARD

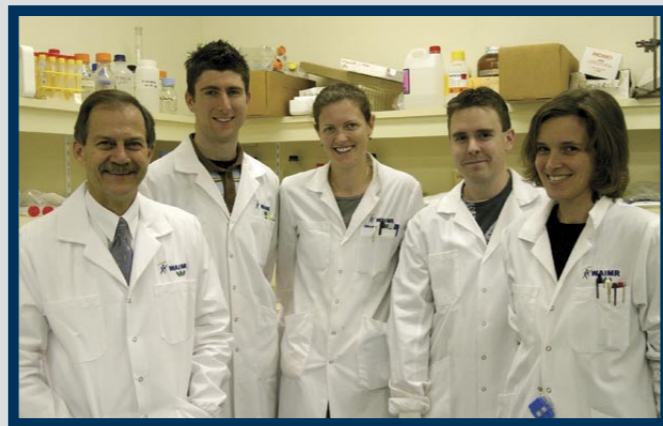
WAIMR research assistant Danielle Dye has received an award for her PhD work at this year's Australian Society for Medical Research Gala Dinner.

Danielle took out the University of Western Australia Award, which was presented to her by Professor Doug McEachern, UWA's Pro Vice-Chancellor of Research and Innovation.

Her PhD work is investigating the role of the protein MCAM (melanoma cell adhesion molecule) in aiding the spread of melanoma cells throughout the body.

The research could ultimately lead to better treatment options for skin cancer.

Her PhD is supervised by Curtin University Associate Professor Deirdre Coombe, as well as WAIMR Director Peter Klinken.



From L to R: Professor Klinken, Simon Kobelke, Clare Morgan, Scott Cornwall & Dr Louise Winteringham

A new addition to the WAIMR team probing the gene is University of Western Australia (UWA) researcher Scott Cornwall.

Scott was awarded a \$75,000 scholarship – funded by UWA/WAIMR and the Rotary clubs of Claremont-Cottesloe and Nedlands, as well as the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund.

Around 650 Australians are diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia each year – the genetic causes of these leukaemias are gradually being identified.



Danielle Dye receiving her award from Professor McEachern

Since completing her PhD experimental work, Danielle has joined Professor Nigel Laing in the WAIMR Molecular Neurogenetics Laboratory, focusing on inherited muscle diseases.

Professor Klinken also presented the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research Student Prize to PhD student Sharyn Pope, from Curtin University's School of Biomedical Sciences.

TWO NEW FACILITIES BOOST WAIMR RESEARCH

A new state-of-the-art biomedical research facility based at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital is set to speed up research into the genetic causes of human diseases.

National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) CEO Professor Alan Pettigrew recently opened the Biomedical Research Facility, which is a joint venture between the University of Western Australia (UWA) and WAIMR.

"It's essential to have not only appropriate, but excellent facilities, which allow for the concentration of expertise and experience to maximise the productivity of the research effort," Professor Pettigrew said.

"This a very impressive facility that bodes well for the future of biomedical research in Western Australia."

WAIMR Director Peter Klinken said the facility provided cutting-edge housing and equipment for testing of human diseases in various model systems.

"The centre's innovative new technologies and equipment will enable more rapid identification and testing of genes responsible for certain diseases," said Professor Klinken.

The facility has been funded by a \$3.3m infrastructure grant from the NHMRC.

UWA committed a further \$20m as part of a 3-phased approach to improve facilities.

In another major development, WAIMR has established a Monoclonal Antibody Facility to produce pure antibodies for medical or research purposes.

Facility Head Kathleen Davern said the centre was the first of its kind in the State.



From L to R: Professor Klinken, Dr Judy Edwards, Professor Pettigrew, Professor Alan Robson & Professor Doug McEachern

"Researchers can use these antibodies to speed up their investigations into the causes and treatments of many health disorders, such as cancer," she said.

"This initiative also offers benefits to research departments of biotechnology and drug companies, giving them access to the custom-made antibodies they need to develop new products such as diagnostic tools."

The establishment of the Monoclonal Antibody Facility was supported by UWA and the Wind Over Water Foundation.

PAYING TRIBUTE ON "THANK YOU" DAY

"Thank You" Day 2005 is fast approaching and WAIMR will again host this year's Perth celebrations.

The annual event, held by Research Australia, acknowledges the life-changing work undertaken by health and medical researchers.

"Thank You" Day will officially be launched in Canberra on October 10.

From there, Research Australia's massive "Thank You" Day card will begin a journey around the nation.

Perth gets its turn to thank local researchers on Friday October 21.

This year, Research Australia aims to gather 100,000 messages of gratitude – to express your thanks to researchers that have made a difference visit www.thankyouday.org



Research Australia CEO Christine Bennett at last year's "Thank You" Day event