



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



MEDIA STATEMENT

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KEEPING W.A. AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF NEUROTRAUMA RESEARCH

Perth scientists say an \$8million funding boost will help keep Western Australia at the forefront of neurotrauma research.

The State Government has committed the funding over five years to the internationally-renowned Neurotrauma Research Program (NRP), Chaired by Professor Bryant Stokes, at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR).

NRP Program Coordinator and University of Western Australia (UWA) Professor Lyn Beazley, said the financial injection would allow scientists to step up research into the treatment and repair of brain and spinal cord injuries.

“Our world-leading research has already led to significant breakthroughs, such as the discovery that cell transplantation, peripheral nerve grafts and gene therapy stimulate nerve fibre regrowth through injured spinal cord and brain,” she said.

“This funding will assist us in being able to build on these advances, with the aim of leading to improved therapies and treatments to help neurotrauma patients recover better and faster, and give them greater quality of life.”

UWA Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alan Robson, said the State Government's commitment to the Neurotrauma Research Program marked a significant step in advancing the level of scientific and medical research carried out in Western Australia.

"This initiative of the State Government is most welcome in that it allows high quality researchers in WA to build on the tremendous work and progress they have achieved in this area over recent years," he said.

"Working collaboratively across various research institutes and universities in WA, and in other states, these individuals are at the cutting edge of modern science and medical research and could lead to marked increases and benefits in the quality of life for individuals who have suffered severe injury and trauma and also their families.

"We must ensure that the communities we serve understand, value and appreciate the work of these dedicated individuals working in cross disciplinary teams to achieve better outcomes for our society," he said.

WAIMR Director Professor Klinken said the funding commitment was another vote of confidence in medical research in WA, and would help researchers take more breakthroughs to the bedsides of West Australians.

For more information about UWA: <http://www.uwa.edu.au>

“We are world leaders in neuroscience and this funding boost will allow us to stay at the cutting edge of this important area of medical research.”

The allocation of funds to researchers has been carried out on the recommendation of national and international experts in the fields of neuronal salvage and nerve cell regeneration.

Road crashes are the leading cause of neurotrauma and, in 2005, 335 people were hospitalised in WA with significant brain or spinal injuries as a result of road crashes.

The annual economic impact of neurotrauma on the WA community is estimated to be more than \$150million.

NRP Background Information

The WA Road Safety Council recognised the importance of research aimed at minimising and reversing the disabilities associated with neurotrauma, providing vital funding to the NRP since the Program’s inception in 1999 (\$3million over the last 6 years).

The NRP has helped facilitate an unprecedented degree of collaboration within the WA neuroscience community.

It has also helped put together key pieces of the central nervous system injury puzzle, earning the NRP an international reputation as an innovative and productive leader in neurotrauma research.

Examples of NRP breakthroughs include the discovery that:

- Tissue death following brain injury is greatly reduced when magnesium chloride and mild hypothermia are applied in combination
- Training is essential whilst regeneration is taking place following brain injury to ensure nerve fibres re-grow and re-connect appropriately, allowing return of function

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