



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



October 2, 2007

### Media Statement

#### **MEDICAL RESEARCH WITH HEART IN MIND**

West Australian researchers have embarked on a world-first project which hopes to uncover why most people with heart failure will go on to develop memory and cognitive problems.

The aim of the Heart Mind Study at the WA Centre for Health and Ageing (WACHA) is to improve quality of life for people with congestive heart failure and pin-point when and how to prevent the decline of memory, language, mood, awareness and judgment.

Scientists at WACHA, based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), and The University of Western Australia are calling for volunteer help with the Heart Mind Study to gain a deeper insight into the link between heart failure and cognitive impairment.

WACHA Professor Osvaldo Almeida said the Heart Mind Study was a new approach as this link had not been explored before and the Study was a step towards halting cognitive decline for one of the most common conditions in Australia.

“We know that heart failure has strong links with mental health and conditions including stroke and depression, but what the Heart Mind Study will track are changes occurring over time in the brain that may cause impaired cognition following heart failure,” he said.

“If we can determine what triggers these changes in the brain, we have a chance to develop ways of intervening to delay or even prevent the start of this decline and dramatically improve quality of life for people with congestive heart failure.

“This is an important line of investigation given that sadly, most people suffering this very common condition will experience memory and cognition impairment which often gets worse with time.”

Congestive heart failure occurs when the heart’s pumping action is reduced, often due to underlying problems such as hardening of the arteries and high blood pressure.

“The Heart Mind Study aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people who experience heart failure and we hope it could also lead us to clues for other common conditions like Alzheimer’s disease – but we urgently need volunteer help to do it,” Professor Almeida said.

“I encourage anyone with a history of heart failure to consider taking part in the Heart Mind Study because it’s a great opportunity to leave a legacy that could help your children and grandchildren, as well as have a positive effect on your own health.”

The Heart Mind Study is now calling for volunteers who have had a heart attack or congestive heart failure.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Cheryl Ackoy on 9224 2855 during office hours.

#### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

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