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Media Statement

WAIMR RESEARCHER TAKES OUT TOP SCIENCE AWARD

A passion for helping patients diagnosed with devastating muscle disorders has helped South Perth researcher Dr Kristen Nowak take out one of WA's top science awards.

Dr Nowak, who works at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), was last night announced as the winner of the Premier's Prize for Early Career Achievement in Science 2007 at a ceremony at Scitech.

The prize recognises a scientist under the age of 35 who has demonstrated excellence in their field of science in Western Australia.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said he was thrilled Kristen had been honoured for her outstanding career in medical research.

"At just 32, Kristen has achieved much success in her field, having already made some enormously exciting discoveries that have made a real difference in the lives of people with muscle diseases," he said.

"Not only have people in Western Australia and across the country benefited from the research done by Kristen and her colleagues, but patients worldwide have gained also."

In 1999, Dr Nowak discovered that defects in a particular gene could cause multiple skeletal muscle diseases – a previously unknown cause – and went on to develop a tool leading to the establishment of world-wide screening centres, including one based in Perth, to diagnose the disease.

Dr Nowak, who was presenting her research at the 12th International Congress of the World Muscle Society in Italy when she was announced as the winner, thanked the State Government for its support of science in WA.

"It's an honour to be recognised for my work and to be able to be part of such a vibrant, growing medical research community in WA," she said.

"The support I have received from the head of my laboratory, Professor Nigel Laing, has been amazing and we're very excited that our work has helped give many families much needed answers."

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