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Media Statement

PERTH SCIENTIST'S CRUCIAL MUSCLE CULTURE DISCOVERY

A Perth scientist and a local biotechnology company have combined to create a more advanced technique for analysing mature skeletal muscle in culture that could help fast-track breakthroughs in treating muscle diseases.

The method was spearheaded by Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) PhD student Gina Ravenscroft, who was able to collaborate with Dr Sam Gallagher from North Perth-based Molecular Discovery Systems (MDSystems), a wholly owned subsidiary of ASX-listed Perth biotech company BioPharmica Ltd (ASX: BPH) in order to make the method even more invaluable.

The technique has been detailed in a paper published in the October issue of the journal Cell Motility and the Cytoskeleton.

Professor Nigel Laing, who heads WAIMR's Laboratory for Molecular Genetics where the technique was established, said this advance was of great benefit.

"We've been able to use a new method that enables us to culture skeletal muscle in the laboratory which is more mature than cultures we've been able to create in the past," he said.

"The potential of this is vast as it gives us a better platform to screen drugs that may be able to be used to treat diseases of skeletal muscle."

The group presented the new technique at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the World Muscle Society in Sicily last month to great interest from the world's muscle disease research community.

Dr Gallagher said that the IN Cell Analyzer 1000 technology based at MDSystems played a large part in this latest discovery.

"With this machine, we can get a very clear visual picture of these mature muscle fibres and quantitatively measure the amount of protein they express, which is invaluable in determining the efficacy of activation of drugs that are applied," she said.

Professor Laing's laboratory was the first to discover mutations in two fundamental muscle genes, actin and myosin, which cause muscle diseases.

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