

In 2008 WAIMR celebrates 10 years since its inception and the many internationally-important discoveries which have transformed it into WA's premier adult medical research institute.



August 11, 2008

Media Statement

NEW PROGRESS IN SEARCH OF A DIABETES CURE

When it comes to diabetes research, finding a needle in haystack has just become a definite possibility, thanks to a new piece of machinery that will help Perth scientists in their search for a cure.

The Centre for Diabetes Research, within the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) recently acquired the latest FACS Aria II machine, to help them pinpoint a unique adult stem cell amongst a complex mix of cells within blood samples.

Head of the Centre Professor Grant Morahan said the new machine would allow the team to quickly do what would have otherwise been impossible just with the human hand.

"This machine is state-of-the-art and will let us pick out a very special '1 in a million' cell type" he said.

"It can select out these adult stem cells that we can then grow into cells that can produce insulin.

"Our ultimate aim is to find a cure for both type 1 diabetes, and some cases of type 2 diabetes, by manufacturing insulin producing cells in the laboratory and this machine gives us the opportunity to make real progress."

The FACS Aria II machine, a high-speed bench-top cell sorter, will become part of the Centre's Islet Stem Cell program.

It comes with a price tag of \$450,000, which has been funded by a collaboration of diabetes dedicated organizations.

Contributors are WAIMR, the Diabetes Research Foundation, The University of Western Australia's Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry, and Diabetes WA.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said the contribution from all parties was testament to the dedication of WA health groups to combat this growing disease.

"We're seeing type 1 diabetes, a genetic condition, growing at a fast pace in Australia, and this team work says a lot about the commitment of leading health groups in WA to improve the outlook for those affected by this condition," he said.

Between 2000 and 2006, there were almost 9,000 new diagnoses of type 1 diabetes in people aged 15 years and above - equating to three new cases per day, and more than 6,000 new diagnoses in children from 0 to 14 years of age - more than two new cases each day.*

As well as helping to develop a cure for diabetes within the Centre, the FACS Aria II will also be available for other WA researchers investigating cancer, AIDS, and other diseases.

*Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Incidence of Type 1 diabetes in Australia 2000-2006: first results', <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10581>

-ENDS-

MEDIA CONTACT: Sarah Hayward, WAIMR Media Consultant, m 0411 404 415, o 9388 9280