

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.

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Media Statement

MEDICAL RESEARCH VETERAN TAKES ON DIABETES

A Dianella researcher is leading a team of scientists in search of a cure for type 1 diabetes with renewed vigor in the run up to World Diabetes Day on Friday November 14.

Based at the Centre for Diabetes Research at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), Dr Fang-Xu Jiang has a career spanning 12 years, and is now focusing his attention on transplantation therapy for type 1 diabetes.

Dr Jiang said the ultimate aim of his research at the Centre was to provide a cure for diabetes, which is caused by the failure of beta cells to produce insulin, that could be achieved by either stimulating a person's own stem cells to transform into vital 'beta cells', or generating insulin-producing 'beta cells' in the lab which could then be transplanted to the patient.

"This research is a first for Western Australia and probably the world, and for the foreseeable future there is no better alternative to potentially cure diabetes than the regeneration of insulin-producing beta cells or transplantation therapy," he said.

A renewable source of insulin producing cells could help treat people with type 1 diabetes because these cells are attacked by the immune system in people with the condition.

"We have made solid progress in developing methods to stimulate cells of the pancreas that could help to generate enough insulin-producing beta cells used in transplantation therapy," Dr Jiang said.

"All my projects aim to help saves lives and reduce the suffering of people with type 1 diabetes, and we've had some great breakthroughs in the past few years – so, now with World Diabetes Day around the corner, it spurs us on as the world's attention turns to overcoming this chronic disease."

Dr Jiang said with generous contributions from many Western Australians, and the Diabetes Research Foundation WA, the research was progressing well, but could always do with more support to help fast-tracked results.

"I love to take up a challenge and believe finding a cure for diabetes is a huge challenge – and I'm confident, that with time, continued work, and vital support, we will find the answers."

Head of the Centre Professor Morahan said that Dr Jiang's work and leadership were essential to the continued success of the program.

"Type 1 diabetes is a global health problem, so Dr Jiang's previous research as well as his investigations today, will play a key role in improving the health of not only West Australians but across the world," he said.

WAIMR's Centre for Diabetes Research was established with the support of the Diabetes Research Foundation which will celebrate its 30 year anniversary on World Diabetes Day with a luncheon at Royal Perth yacht Club, where Professor Morahan will inform guests of the team's progress.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken and Deputy Director Professor Peter Leedman will also address guests at the luncheon.

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