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Media Statement

THORNIE RESIDENT WORKING TOWARDS A CURE FOR DIABETES

Managing type 1 diabetes herself, Thornlie scientist Emma Jamieson is investigating a cure for the condition with added motivation in the run up to World Diabetes Day on Friday November 14.

A medical researcher at the Centre for Diabetes Research within the Western Australia Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), Ms Jamieson said she was spurred on by her own diagnosis of diabetes to undertake a project that hoped to bypass the need for organ donation to cure diabetes.

“I’ve had type 1 diabetes since the age of 11, and even from school age, I’ve dreamt of researching type 1 diabetes in the hope of one day finding a cure,” she said.

Ms Jamieson said her research involved trying to identify special cells within the pancreas that could be converted to insulin-producing cells, and ultimately grow an unlimited number of these cells in the laboratory.

“Type 1 diabetes means the body destroys crucial insulin producing cells and currently, transplantation therapy involves inserting insulin-producing cells from a donated pancreas into patients.

“Though this treatment is possible, it’s limited, because the number of people with type 1 diabetes far outweighs organ donors – if we can bypass the need for organ donation by growing these cells in the laboratory, then we can create an unlimited supply to transplant into patients.

“Successful transplant procedures mean people with type 1 diabetes will no longer need daily insulin injections, which can be up to six per day, and would eliminate the need to do multiple daily finger pricks to test blood glucose concentrations.

“Most importantly, successful treatment or a cure would mean people with diabetes could live without fear of debilitating long term complications such as blindness, kidney disease or nerve damage.”

Prior to joining WAIMR’s Centre for Diabetes Research in 2005, Ms Jamieson was investigating type 1 diabetes in Melbourne.

“The WAIMR-based team has already made amazing progress and I look forward to the time when we no longer need to rely on organ donations to implement an effective therapy.”

Head of the Centre for Diabetes Research Professor Grant Morahan said Emma’s work was essential to the continued success of the program.

“Emma is one of Australia's best research specialists in this area and her work will lead us to a better understanding of how to treat and eventually cure type 1 and some forms of type 2 diabetes, which would improve the quality of life and health outcome for millions of people around the world.”

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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