

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.



November 12, 2008

Media Statement

WESTERN SUBURBS SCIENTIST MAKING A GLOBAL MARK

Nedlands researcher Dr Kevin Pflieger is vying for top honours after being named as a finalist in this year's Premier's Science Awards.

The announcement comes hot on the heels of the 31-year-old being invited to be part of a prestigious scientific panel meeting in the United States on November 20.

Dr Pflieger, from the Nedlands-based Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) is in the running for Young Scientist of the Year – a prize awarded to a scientist under the age of 35 who has demonstrated excellence in their field in Western Australia.

This year, two of the category's three finalists are WAIMR scientists – standing alongside Dr Pflieger, who heads WAIMR's Laboratory for Molecular Endocrinology – G Protein-Coupled Receptors, is colleague Dr Oliver Rackham.

As one of only 17 researchers worldwide who have been invited to join the prestigious U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) round table discussion at Bethesda near Washington DC, Dr Pflieger is being acknowledged as a leader in his field.

As the only representative from outside the U.S and Europe, Dr Pflieger said he was honoured to receive the invitation.

"It's an amazing privilege to have the opportunity to be amongst some of the greatest scientific minds and discuss and give input on issues that will have a major influence on the direction of future research," he said.

"As part of our discussions, the panel will have the prestigious task of deciding official names for newly-discovered protein complexes and drug interactions, and the added honour of our final report being published in a world-leading journal."

Dr Pflieger has been recognised in the Premier's Science Awards 2008 for his contribution to medical research in developing improved technologies to identify new drugs and drug targets for a range of conditions.

Dr Pflieger helped to invent a new form of a technology which places special light-emitting labels on proteins of interest, allowing interactions between proteins to be studied. Advances demonstrated by the team have now enabled novel interactions to be monitored in real-time in living cells for extended time periods and with sufficient sensitivity to enable screening for new drugs.

On top of these developments, Dr Pflieger and his laboratory colleagues will present findings from five of their projects at the Molecular Pharmacology of G Protein-Coupled Receptors (GPCRs) 2008 conference in mid-November in Sydney.

"The discoveries we're presenting are exciting because the results could potentially have important implications for treating a whole range of conditions including reproductive, metabolic, sleep and kidney disorders," Dr Pflieger said.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said he was thrilled by Dr Pflieger's ongoing success.

-MORE-

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.



“Kevin’s invitation to attend the NIH round table discussion and his selection as a finalist in the Premier’s Science Awards are due recognition for his very important contribution to medical research to date and we are very proud to have him on the WAIMR team,” he said.

The winners of the Premier’s Science Awards 2008 will be announced in a ceremony to be held at the Perth Convention Centre on December 4.

BACKGROUND

WAIMR’s Dr Rackham has been recognised in the Premier’s Science Awards 2008 for contributions which include the invention of a new technique which has allowed scientists to see RNA-protein interactions in living cells, for the first time.

Dr Rackham’s main research focus is in “hijacking” bacteria to make microscopic drug factories which offers potential for scientists all over the world to produce drugs inexpensively, and lead to advances in drug availability and affordability in developing countries.

Last year, WAIMR celebrated Dr Kristen Nowak’s honour in the competition, taking out the Premier’s Prize for Early Career Achievement in Science 2007.

-ENDS-

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