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Media Statement

**PERTH SCIENTIST AWARDED NATIONAL GRANT FOR LEUKAEMIA**

Perth scientists have been awarded a national Leukaemia Foundation grant to take their genetic discovery a step further and investigate its potential to improve treatment for leukaemia .

Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) Director Professor Peter Klinken and Dr Louise Winteringham received a \$92,000 grant-in-aid from the Foundation as part of annual funding for research projects into the causes, treatment and care of people living with leukaemia and related blood disorders.

Dr Winteringham said the grant would support the team's work in examining a certain type of abnormal stem cell, thought to be a cause of relapse for leukaemia patients following treatment.

"Leukaemia is usually treated with chemotherapy, bone marrow transplantation or a combination of both, but what is devastating for many patients is that the leukaemia can return after finishing the intensive treatment," she said.

"Ten years ago, our team identified 'Mlf1', a gene that makes treatment of an aggressive form of leukaemia more difficult – following on from this discovery, we've found this gene contributes to the development of a certain type of abnormal stem cell which causes the leukaemia.

"This abnormal stem cell manages to escape current treatments, so if we can target it we may eventually be able to stop leukaemia from reoccurring.

"We hope our research will ultimately lead to earlier detection and treatment of leukaemic cells in patients, and help prevent leukaemia returning after difficult and demanding treatment."

In 2009, approximately 3,100 Australians are projected to have been diagnosed with leukaemia - the equivalent of eight people every day.\*

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said he was honoured to receive the acknowledgement and funding from the Foundation, which would go a long way in helping the team continue its research.

"Leukaemia affects so many Australian families, which is why we're dedicated to investigating ways to improve current treatments and outcomes for patients," he said.

"I'm very proud of the team's progress and extremely grateful for the Leukemia Foundation's commitment to the research being conducted in WAIMR."

The Leukaemia Foundation's General Manager Michelle Fraser said she was delighted to see an additional research grant being awarded to a Perth research team and that she was eagerly awaiting the results of the study.

"It is through the ongoing support of the general public and corporate sector that the Foundation is able to invest in the many world class researchers across Australia and we endeavour to continue the national research program to further advance treatments and ultimately cures for blood cancers," she said.

**-ENDS-**

\*Source – Leukaemia Foundation:

[http://www.leukaemia.org.au/fileadmin/dl-docs/factsheets2/FactSheet\\_LF\\_Leukaemias.pdf](http://www.leukaemia.org.au/fileadmin/dl-docs/factsheets2/FactSheet_LF_Leukaemias.pdf)(.)

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