

July 14, 2009

Media Statement

FRESH FUNDING IN SEARCH FOR GENETIC PROTECTION AGAINST MELANOMA

WA researchers have received a funding boost of \$100,000 in a vital search for genes that may naturally protect the body against melanoma.

Professor Grant Morahan is leading a team of scientists from the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), which has been awarded funding from the Harry Secomb Foundation.

The Foundation is managed by Perpetual Private Wealth, the private wealth business of Perpetual Limited.

Professor Morahan said the grant would support an ongoing project looking into genetic clues that may help the body strengthen its own prevention against melanoma.

“If we are able to pinpoint specific genetic signs that give clues as to how it develops and evades the immune system, we will be able to gain a better understanding of the causes of melanoma as well as provide opportunities to find new ways to treat this disease,” he said.

“Our country has the world’s highest rate of melanoma, and while we know UV exposure is a major risk factor, genetic background is also important.”

More than 10,000 cases of melanoma are diagnosed annually with more than 1200 people dying from the aggressive cancer each year.*

“The success of this project could pave the way for identifying genes that may not only help protect against melanoma but other cancers, diabetes, neurological diseases, and cardiovascular diseases as well,” Professor Morahan said.

Perpetual’s Senior Financial Consultant, Mr Chris Marshall, said he was thrilled the organisation was able to carry out the wishes of philanthropic bequests and help advance such a significant area of Australian medical research.

“Skin cancer and melanoma in particular, is something that will sadly affect most Australians in one way or another during their lives,” he said. “The contribution made by the trusts and foundations we manage towards funding critical research undertaken by the WAIMR team is very important to combating this major issue in our community.”

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said the funding was extremely valuable to the Institute and their generosity was commendable.

“Community support from funding organisations is crucial to the sustainability of our Institute – their commitment will give this research project a huge boost and offer hope for improved treatment of melanoma in the future,” he said.

The study will extend a research project recently initiated with funding from the WAIMR-based Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre.

Each year, the trusts and foundations managed by Perpetual distribute approximately \$40 million of funds to charitable organisations and individuals across Australia, this includes Perpetual’s awards and scholarship programs.

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*Source - Cancer Council Australia <http://www.cancer.org.au/aboutcancer/cancertypes/melanoma.htm>

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