

July 15, 2009

Media Statement

MEDICAL RESEARCHER GOES DRY IN JULY FOR CANCER SUPPORT

Inspired by the tragic loss of her friend and fellow student, a young Como researcher has taken the pledge of a 'Dry July' and is urging others to sign up for the cause to directly help the lives of people living with cancer.

Dr Connie Jackaman from the Nedlands-based Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) has experienced first-hand the upsetting loss of a friend to cancer as well as the reliance of medical advances on charitable giving.

Dr Jackaman said her motivation to stay away from alcohol during July and raise money for cancer patients was in memory of a young friend who lost a three year battle with leukemia at just 28 years of age.

"My friend and I were working on our PhD into malignant mesothelioma and lung cancer when she was diagnosed with leukaemia and it was just such a huge shock," she said.

"Sadly, she passed away last year, so I see my involvement in the Dry July campaign as a way of honouring her and helping those people in the same situation."

The research paper resulting from their work was published in the prestigious *International Immunology* journal in 2008 and was awarded the journal's Outstanding Merit Award for that year.

"Another big motivation for me comes from personal experience in medical research – knowing just how vital donations are to research and services for serious illness," she said.

Dr Jackaman is part of WAIMR's Laboratory for Neuromuscular Diseases and is involved in research into improved treatments and a cure for devastating muscle diseases.

The national Dry July fundraiser challenges people to give their liver a rest and abstain from alcohol while gathering as many sponsors from friends and family as possible. Funds go to six hospitals around Australia to improve the day-to-day lives of cancer sufferers.

"One of the great advantages of the fundraiser is that by taking part you are also helping your own health by giving your liver a rest, so you are helping others as well as yourself at the same time," Dr Jackaman said.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said Dr Jackaman had made an inspirational and selfless pledge and hoped many followed in her efforts.

"It's heartwarming and encouraging to see someone putting such a huge effort into their passion of helping others improve their health, for no personal gain – Connie has set a fantastic example for others to follow," he said.

-ENDS-

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