

November 4, 2009

Media Statement

WA INSTITUTE SHARES IN NEARLY \$5 MILLION FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH

Researchers at the State's premier adult medical research facility, the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) have shared in nearly \$5 million from the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) for investigations into conditions including cancer and cardiovascular disease, continuing their strong success rate well above the rest of the State.

WAIMR Director Professor Peter Klinken said he was thrilled the Institute had once again received outstanding results in this year's grant allocations, which was testament to the calibre of its researchers.

"Year after year, I am delighted with the strong support given to our research teams by the NHMRC – congratulations to all our scientists whose tireless efforts and passion to find answers for life-threatening illnesses has earned them valuable funding," he said.

"I know I speak for all our recipients in expressing how grateful we are for the funding allocated to our teams. These funds are for our quest to relieve suffering caused by serious health conditions that affect so many Australians and their families.

"We couldn't continue our work without the support of bodies like the NHMRC and for that we're always grateful – we are doing our best to maximise the use of dollars given to the Institute and offer hope to families affected by serious illness."

As well as securing a grant for his own investigations into leukemia, Professor Klinken said there were a number of other WAIMR researchers who'd successfully received support for important projects.

"Professor Ruth Ganss was awarded a prestigious NHMRC Senior Research Fellowship for her ongoing investigation into the gene 'RGS5', which she discovered could reverse the growth of blood vessels within a cancer tumour," he said.

"This is wonderful recognition of the terrific work that Ruth has been conducting in this area for several years. In addition, Professor Ganss has received an NHMRC grant to examine the gene's potential role in cardiovascular disease, including hypertension and stroke.

"Associate Professor Evan Ingley has been awarded a grant to continue his study of pathways in blood cells, which could offer a key in treating leukemia. This work may also have implications for solid cancers such as breast, prostate and colon cancer.

"A project that will combine the knowledge of two research groups at WAIMR, Dr Aleksandra Filipovska and Professor Nigel Laing, with UWA's A/Prof Livia Hool, will bring their expertise in mitochondria and muscle disease respectively to investigate novel aspects of heart disease."

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Other WAIMR recipients of NHMRC research grants include:

- ✦ Deputy Director Professor Peter Leedman and Dr Keith Giles for research using microRNAs to modify cancer cell growth. miRNAs have been shown to be aberrantly expressed in a range of human diseases, including cancer. Furthermore, altering the level of a miRNA within a cell is a powerful way to regulate gene expression of target proteins.
- ✦ Among a group of researchers, Deputy Director Professor John Olynyk, for research into genetic, developmental and environmental factors associated with insulin resistance.
- ✦ A team including WAIMR-based Western Australian Centre for Health and Ageing Director Professor Leon Flicker, for a follow-up study into the health of older indigenous Australians.
- ✦ Professor Leon Flicker and Professor Osvaldo Almeida will lead a group of WA researchers to continue analysis of the Health in Men Study for predictions of disease.
- ✦ Prof David Ravine and UWA collaborators for a study on screening for chronic disease prevention.

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