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Media Statement

**AUSTRALIAN MEN AID WA PROSTATE CANCER RESEARCH**

New funding is allowing Perth scientists to study tissue samples from men diagnosed with prostate cancer in a bid to better predict how these patients will react to certain types of treatment, and their long term survival.

The research, by Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) deputy director Peter Leedman and WAIMR co-investigator Shane Colley, focuses on determining whether the protein SLIRP can be used as a biomarker for prostate cancer and is being made possible thanks to \$125,000 of funding from the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia.

Professor Leedman said the study would analyse hundreds of tissue samples volunteered by Australian men.

“Our extensive early research reveals SLIRP is linked to two distinct biochemical pathways involved in prostate cancer and that human prostate cancer cells with altered SLIRP levels can multiply faster,” he said.

“That leads us to believe that SLIRP may act as a ‘brake’ on prostate cancer cell growth and this research, by examining the levels of the protein found in the tissue of men with the disease, could help us identify ways of predicting how particular patients will respond to treatment and improve their chance of beating the disease.

“For example, if we find that patients with less SLIRP are more severely affected, it may mean that in future similar cases will be treated more aggressively.”

Dr Colley said the research also hoped to find out more about SLIRP’s role in prostate cancer cell growth.

“We have some very exciting initial data, but the more information we can gather about this intriguing gene, the better chance we have of improving upon our current treatments, ultimately helping patients live longer and healthier lives.

SLIRP was uncovered at WAIMR in 2006 by Professor Leedman’s team in collaboration with Texan researchers.

Each year in Australia, close to 3,300 men die of prostate cancer – equal to the number of women who die from breast cancer annually – and about 20,000 new cases are diagnosed every year.

One in 9 men in Australia will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime, making it the most common cancer in Australian men and the second most common cause of cancer deaths in men.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

**Natalie Papadopoulos, Capture Media, m 0407 984 435, o 9381 8237**