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Media Statement

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS TO HELP ELIMINATE PAIN OF BREAST CANCER

Australian researchers are calling for volunteers in the hope of one day offering a drug to women with a family history of breast cancer that would put a stop to the drastic action of breast removal many take to avoid this deadly disease.

With its WA recruitment arm based at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), the International Breast Cancer Intervention Study (IBIS II) hopes to uncover whether a drug widely used to treat breast cancer - anastrozole - can also help women avoid the tragic disease.

Leading the IBIS II team Cancer Council Professor of Clinical Research and Director of Clinical Trials Michael Millward said he was concerned that many women at risk of developing breast cancer based on their family history opt for intense surgery to remove and reconstruct their breasts and eliminate the danger.

"Faced with a high risk of breast cancer, we understand why women make the choice to remove their breasts, but this is major surgery with a lot of emotional challenges attached, so we hope we can one day offer a drug so they don't have to make that decision," he said.

"Over the next five years, we'll be looking at the effectiveness of anastrozole as a preventative measure for women with increased risk of breast cancer because of a strong family history of the disease, which could help save thousands of lives.

"So far we've had great success in our recruitment, with 158 WA women signing up to be part of the IBIS II trial – which gives us the third highest volunteer rate across the world.

"Thanks to the generosity of WA women and the well-organised approach we have taken to recruitment, we've had a fantastic response, but IBIS II still needs many more women to join the trial before we can complete our research."

The IBIS II team is calling for 6000 women across 21 countries including Australia, New Zealand, India, Chile, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom with a family history of breast cancer to take part in the trial.

"We're asking all post-menopausal women aged between 40 and 70 with a family history of breast cancer to contact us at WAIMR in Nedlands to join the trial which involves taking a daily tablet for five years - randomly selected placebo or medication - as well as regular health checks with us."

Professor Millward said previous research on anastrozole as a treatment for early stage breast cancer revealed it may prevent up to 80 per cent of hormone-receptor positive tumours in women at high risk of breast cancer.

IBIS II in WA is a collaborative effort between WAIMR, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and The University of Western Australia with Professor of Surgery Christobel Saunders the main investigator.

For more information or to sign-up for the IBIS II trial, please call 1800 640 709.

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