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Media Statement

WA SCIENTISTS SPREAD MEDICAL RESEARCH MESSAGE TO THORNIE STUDENTS

Scientists from WA's premier adult medical research institute are visiting WA schools – including Thornlie Senior High School on Monday August 16 – to help students understand how genetics can unravel the mysteries of human disease.

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) team members will be sharing their experiences in the field and the important role genetics plays in medical research as part of a state-wide school competition being run by Huntington's Western Australia and WAIMR.

Entitled "The Hunt is on; understanding Huntington's Disease", the competition is open to students from Year 9, 10 & 11 and involves students producing an article about Huntington's Disease.

WAIMR acting director Professor Peter Leedman said he was excited his team was able to take part in the school visits.

"This type of initiative can not only play a role in sparking the interest of a new generation of forward-thinking medical researchers, but also help educate students about the science behind their health," he said.

"We've made massive jumps in recent times in our understanding of how our genes are linked to either ill health or good health so to give students a deeper insight into this area could ultimately assist them to make better lifestyle choices."

WAIMR's Dr Kristen Nowak said she was looking forward to sharing not only the latest scientific breakthroughs in genetics, but the highlights of a career in medical research.

"It's a great feeling knowing that your work can directly impact families affected by diseases – and it's an incredible feeling to have a 'eureka' moment when something you've been working on falls into place," she said.

"On top of that, wrapping your head around new technologies and the opportunity of travelling to further your research is exciting."

Huntington's WA executive officer Dee Sidhu said "The Hunt is on; understanding Huntington's Disease" competition aimed to raise awareness of the disease.

"Contest finalists will be invited to Science Day for an up-close-and-personal look at the impact of the condition and hear from some of the state's top Huntington's Disease experts about progress in the search for life-changing treatments," said Ms Sidhu.

"The winner of the competition will also be announced on the day by The Honorable Lord Mayor of Perth Lisa Scaffidi."

Limited seats for the morning session are available for community members to attend the free event at Lake Monger on September 16. To reserve your place, please call (08) 9346 7599.

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