

Funding stops “brain drain”

Two of Western Australia’s brightest young stars in the field of medical research have secured Australian Research Council Future Fellowships, which will help them to continue their cutting edge work in laboratories at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR).

Dr Kristen Nowak will be working on a project pursuing multiple therapeutic approaches for a class of skeletal muscle diseases, which are severe and often lethal within the first year of life. It will also hunt down the defective genes in patients with other neuromuscular diseases and explore how these mutated genes cause disease.

Associate Professor Kevin Pflieger’s project will develop and use new and innovative technologies to improve many of the drugs taken for a wide range of medical conditions. The expected outcomes are the discovery of better drugs and a greater understanding of the drugs currently on the market, particularly enabling improved management of side-effects.

Both researchers are linked with the University of Western Australia through WAIMR’s affiliation with the university.

“We are very proud of these two young scientists and delighted that their research will continue here in Western Australia,” said WAIMR’s Acting Director, Peter Leedman. “Only last week Dr Nowak received WA’s Young Tall Poppy Science Award and she and Associate Professor Pflieger have both been Western Australian Young Scientist of the Year.

“They truly are bright lights in the world of research and it’s great to have this recognised by the Federal government through funding,” he said.

The Future Fellowship Scheme was created by the Minister for Innovation, Industry and Research, to ensure that the best researchers are attracted to, or remain in Australia.

The 2010 cohort of Future Fellows includes ten who have returned to Australia and 22 who are overseas citizens.

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