

Marshall Medal for Expert in Mitochondrial Medicine and Biology

The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research has awarded the Marshall Medal, which is the Institute's top accolade for young researchers, to a WAIMR group leader, Aleksandra Filipovska.

The prestigious medal, which is named after Nobel prize winning scientist, Barry Marshall, was awarded at WAIMR's Christmas luncheon.

ARC Future Fellow Filipovska is a leader in her field of biological research into microscopic "factories" known as mitochondria, which are responsible for producing the energy in our cells.

She leads a team of biologists at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research's Perth campus who are working to understand the cause of dysfunction in mitochondrial diseases, which cause babies to be born with incapacitating conditions that prevent them from surviving into adulthood. Between five and ten in 100 thousand babies are born with mitochondrial disease.

In an exciting development, the team has discovered several new mitochondrial proteins and are now investigating their role.

"We are also examining the role mitochondria play in diabetes, cancer and obesity," Aleksandra said. "Although many people might not know they even exist, these tiny structures are such an important part of the cell and we couldn't live without them so it's vital that we do this basic scientific research into how our cells work."

WAIMR Director, Peter Klinken, who presented Aleksandra with the medal said that Aleksandra was following in the tradition of some great young researchers.

"She is well and truly deserving and has done a fantastic job of bringing her team together," Professor Klinken said. "Aleksandra has been recognised nationally and internationally and we're proud to have her in our Western Australian laboratories."

Aleksandra said she was surprised, but delighted to receive the Marshall Medal. "My achievements have been possible because of the generous support from my research team, WAIMR and the WA research community," she said.