

November 7, 2016

Media Statement

**DIABETES SYMPTOMS HARDER TO SPOT IN SUMMER: RESEARCH GROUP**

WA's peak diabetes funding group is urging parents not to dismiss symptoms of diabetes in their children this summer saying the condition can be harder to detect in the warmer weather.

Diabetes Research WA executive director Sherl Westlund said with both forms of diabetes on the rise in Australian children – including a doubling of the rate of type 1 diabetes over the past two decades – it was important families knew the early warning signs.

“Symptoms such as being excessively thirsty and hungry, losing weight, passing urine more and feeling unusually tired can be easier to dismiss in WA’s hot summers when kids are more active so we’re just urging mums and dads to know the signs,” she said.

Madeley student Sophie Anti was told she had type 1 diabetes – an incurable, lifelong condition where the body stops being able to produce insulin because insulin-producing cells have been mistakenly destroyed by the body’s immune system – after becoming seriously ill in February 2013, at the age of eight.

Her mother Carolyn said she experienced a significant amount of guilt when Sophie was diagnosed.

“In hindsight it was clear Sophie had been unwell for a while with all the classic diabetes symptoms but it was hot, she was swimming a lot and I just kept putting it down to her being really active and having a growth spurt,” said Ms Anti.

“It was not until one morning when Sophie said she just could not get out of bed that I knew I had to take her straight to hospital; it is scary just how quickly they can go from being quite OK to being seriously ill.”

Professor Elizabeth Davis, clinical lead of the Princess Margaret Hospital Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes, said spreading awareness of the warning signs was vital.

“More paediatric cases of type 1 diabetes are diagnosed in winter in WA but educating parents about early warning signs is critical because we’re finding that more of the children being diagnosed are presenting with diabetic ketoacidosis. This is a serious condition that results from a delay in diagnosis and can lead to diabetic coma,” she said.

While Sophie enjoys the benefits of wearing an insulin pump, Ms Anti said there was still so much more research needed into the condition.

“We’re hoping one day Sophie may get a new pancreas – one that works – and research is our only hope,” she said.

Diabetes Research WA is hosting its World Diabetes Day event “Diabetes Research WA: Making Extraordinary Discoveries in Diabetes Research” on Friday November 11 in Wembley at 10am.

To RSVP please email [admin@diabetesresearchwa.com.au](mailto:admin@diabetesresearchwa.com.au) or call (08) 9224 1006 by November 3.

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