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Media Statement



WA BID TO UNRAVEL MYSTERY OF DIABESITY LIMITING PROTEIN

WA researchers have begun a bid to unravel the mysteries of a protein believed to help the body limit diet-induced obesity and type 2 diabetes.

The Diabetes Research Foundation of WA (DRFWA) has awarded scientists from the Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research a \$75,000 grant to investigate the protein known as TNFSF14.

Lead researcher Vance Matthews said his team was excited about the potential for the protein to assist in tackling major lifestyle-related health issues.

“Our recent research has revealed TNFSF14 appears to work in a compensatory manner to reduce diet-induced obesity and type 2 diabetes by helping to limit weight gain, insulin resistance and glucose intolerance,” he said.

“This new phase of investigation aims to lift the lid on how it does this; if we can unlock this mystery, it could pave the way for the creation of new treatments to arrest the rising rate of diabetes worldwide.

“As none of the commonly used anti-obesity drugs have resulted in consistent and effective weight loss, there is great interest in developing alternative therapies.”

Study volunteers from WA will also help researchers uncover if levels of the protein decrease after weight loss has reversed type 2 diabetes.

In WA, nearly 38 percent of adults are overweight and 1 in 4 are obese – both are major risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

DRFWA executive director Sheri Westlund said the Foundation was grateful for donations and bequests that had allowed it to fund the study and urged the community to further rally behind the cause this Christmas.

“So much still needs to be done to stem the type 2 diabetes tide and ensuring research such as this – which holds so much promise – gets off the ground is critical,” she said.

“The personal health toll of the condition is huge, as is the financial cost which was, in 2008, \$8.283 billion in Australia.

“This Christmas, the Foundation’s goal is to raise \$150,000 to fund two further WA research projects next year – studies that could make a profound difference.”

The DRFWA, based at Royal Perth Hospital, is the State’s longest running diabetes research funding group, having been established in 1976 to stimulate research into diabetes in Western Australia, has now distributed over \$4.6 million dollars for this work. The DRFWA continues to fund research into all aspects of diabetes including the many complications that can develop from diabetes and programs addressing the need to further understand the psychological impact of living with diabetes, particularly for children and adolescents.

For information about DRFWA, please visit www.diabetesresearchfoundation.asn.au or call (08) 9224 1006.

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