

WA DIABETES RESEARCHERS COMMENCE STUDY TO PREDICT DIABETES

Just ahead of National Diabetes Week (July 13-19), Perth scientists have revealed their study to develop a test to predict type 1 diabetes has begun – and today the lead researcher behind the bid met three WA adventurers aiming to raise \$1 million for research into the disease.

They met for the first time just before Professor Grant Morahan, director of the Centre for Diabetes Research at the Harry Perkins Institute, announced the beginning of the recruitment of volunteers for the study, which is receiving funding from local charity Diabetes Research WA.

Professor Morahan and Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) Diabetes Clinic director Dr Joey Kaye are hopeful that at least 400 people with type 1 diabetes (T1D) who attend the SCGH Diabetes Clinic, together with their unaffected siblings, will put up their hands to take part.

“The study will confirm whether unaffected siblings of a person with type 1 diabetes have a different 'genetic signature'. If so, this will provide a test that will be able to tell if someone is significantly less likely to develop type 1 diabetes,” Professor Morahan said.

“Knowing that younger brothers or sisters are less likely to develop T1D would take away some of the stress felt by families affected by the condition.”

In addition, the test would be able to, at the time of diagnosis of diabetes, predict a person’s risk of developing particular diabetic complications based on their specific genetic signature.

“Such an early diagnosis would inform their treatment and help improve their health outcomes,” said Professor Morahan.

Diabetes Research WA board chairman Erica Smyth, who has type 1 diabetes, said research such as this had the potential to change lives across the globe.

“A test like this would have a huge impact on families worldwide and we are thankful we can fund such groundbreaking projects,” she said.

“We are also very grateful that incredible West Australians such as Glen and Marina Hurst and Guy Cook are getting behind raising funds for our local scientists.”

Glen, Guy and Marina left Albany last Sunday on their 80-day “Hope in a Boat” adventure driving two motorcycles more than 21,000 kilometres around Australia while towing a boat and trailer.

The project is being supported by more than 240 Lions Clubs across the nation and the aim is to raise \$1 million for Diabetes Research WA projects.

BACKGROUND

To support the Hope in a Boat project, call 0427 984 154 or donations can be made to:

National Bank

Lions Club of Albany

Around Australia Fundraising

BSB 086-518 A/C 843 831 400

The WA study will build on Professor Morahan's team's recent breakthroughs in identifying particular genetic signatures that define six different genetic subtypes of type 1 diabetes.

"We've discovered that the specific genetic signature a person with type 1 diabetes has indicates the type of health complications they may develop. For example, those with subtypes 2 and 4 are more likely to have kidney damage while those with subtype 3 seem to be more protected from that complication," he said.

"Knowing what subtype a person has can give doctors more accurate information to manage treatments that suit that person."

Diabetes Research WA, 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 more than \$4.6 million dollars for this work. Diabetes Research WA 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, please visit www.diabetesresearchwa.com.au or call (08) 9224 1006.

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