

WA TEAM WORKING TO CREATE TEST TO PREDICT DIABETES & ITS COMPLICATIONS

WA researchers are working to develop a test that could indicate a person's chances of developing type 1 diabetes, as well as predict the risk of those with the condition developing diabetic complications.

The Diabetes Research Foundation of WA (DRFWA) has awarded a \$75,000 grant to City Beach resident Professor Grant Morahan, director of the Centre for Diabetes Research at the Harry Perkins Institute, to undertake the project, together with Dr Joey Kaye, director of the Diabetes Clinic at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital.

“A test that can be applied at the time of diagnosis and predict someone's lifetime risk of developing diabetic complications – which range from diabetic coma to kidney failure – will be a great help to the children affected, their families, and the clinicians caring for them, as well as saving vital health dollars,” said Professor Morahan.

“Likewise, a test that gives us the ability to be able to say that brothers or sisters of a child with type 1 diabetes will likely remain unaffected will also provide relief to anxious families.”

Professor Morahan said this project would build on his 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.”

Professor Morahan's team has also discovered that if brothers or sisters of a person with type 1 diabetes have a different genetic signature to their affected sibling they are significantly less likely to develop the condition.

“It is very important to confirm these results and then design a test to make use of our powerful new knowledge,” said Professor Morahan.

It is hoped 400 people with type 1 diabetes that are cared for at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, together with their unaffected siblings, will volunteer to be part of the new study.

DRFWA executive director Sherl Westlund said the Foundation was thrilled to be part of such innovative research.

“It's phenomenal that DRFWA's \$75,000 grant has the potential to help make such crucial inroads,” she said.

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 raised and distributed more than \$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, please visit www.diabetesresearchfoundation.asn.au or call (08) 9224 1006.

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Media Contact: Natalie Caudle, natalie@capturemedia.com.au, 0407 984 435