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Media Statement

## **SYMPATHETIC NERVOUS SYSTEM COULD HOLD KEY TO TREATING TYPE 2 DIABETES**

WA researchers have been awarded new funding to investigate if they can tap into the body's sympathetic nervous system to help reduce rates of diet-induced obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes Research WA executive director Sherl Westlund said the group was excited to be able to channel \$80,000 into the research being carried out by University of WA School of Medicine and Pharmacology Assistant Professor Vance Matthews and UWA Winthrop Professor Markus Schlaich, Head of the Dobney Hypertension Centre at the Royal Perth Hospital Campus and the Neurovascular Hypertension & Kidney Disease Lab at Melbourne's Baker IDI Heart & Diabetes Institute.

"We have some incredible minds here in WA that are racing to uncover new ways to be able to prevent the avalanche of type 2 diabetes cases that are predicted to be diagnosed in the coming years and we are honoured to be able to be part of funding that progress," said Ms Westlund.

Assistant Professor Matthews, a Kelmscott resident, said the research had the potential to provide a fresh approach to treating obesity and type 2 diabetes through improving blood sugar levels.

"We've recently generated exciting data which highlights for the first time that the sympathetic nervous system plays a role in regulating the major glucose reabsorption protein, sodium glucose co-transporter 2 or SGLT2 which is believed to be expressed exclusively in the kidney," he said.

"The focus of this grant is to find out if we can develop ways to tap into the sympathetic nervous system and alter the expression of this protein because if we can do that, it opens up new avenues for treating obesity and type 2 diabetes."

Professor Schlaich, a renal physician and hypertension specialist, said with the burden of diabetes increasing rapidly, investing in research was critical.

"The numbers are staggering; more than 1.2 million people are living with diabetes in Australia, with the majority of these cases being type 2 diabetes, and it's believed another two million Australians could have prediabetes putting them at high risk of developing type 2," he said.

"It's a chronic condition that can lead to kidney, heart and eye disease amongst other health complications so doing all we can to find out how to prevent it has to be a local and national priority."

Diabetes Research WA, based at Royal Perth Hospital, was established in 1976 to stimulate research into diabetes in Western Australia and has distributed more than \$5 million dollars for this work.

For information, please visit [www.diabetesresearchwa.com.au](http://www.diabetesresearchwa.com.au) or call (08) 9224 1006.

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