



WAIMR funds Melanoma research

Singapore, July 30, 2010: Two scientists have been awarded grants of \$75,000 each by The Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) to identify new treatments for melanoma as well as boost the effectiveness of chemotherapy drugs against the disease reported the *Australian Life Scientist*.

"Although there is a substantial arsenal of anti-cancer weapons available, melanomas can be particularly challenging because they often don't respond well to chemotherapy, making them difficult to treat," said Dr Robin Scaife of WAIMR's Molecular Discovery Systems laboratory.

"Recent investigations looking at cell division have, however, brought to light potential new strategies to target chemo resistant cancerous cells, opening up the possibility of using current chemotherapy drugs with more success." he said. He added that several new experimental drugs targeting growth pathways involved in melanoma were showing positive results.

Dr Scaife and his colleagues, WAIMR director Prof Peter Klinken and University of Western Australia Prof Jiakę Xu will use sophisticated cell imaging and analysis equipment at WAIMR's Molecular Discovery Systems laboratory to screen large numbers of drug-like molecules in a bid to identify new drug leads.

The other grant recipient, WAIMR scientist Dr Keith Giles, is examining two microRNA molecules linked to melanoma in the hope of uncovering new approaches to prevent the invasion and growth of the disease.

"We are investigating if these molecules have the power to slow the progress of melanoma cell growth, and also if their presence may make melanoma cells more sensitive to some chemotherapy drugs," Dr Giles said.

Both grants are from the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre (SKMRC). Scott Kirkbride was a young Perth golfer who died of melanoma at age 27 in 2004. Australia has among the world's highest rates of melanoma with some 10,000 new cases diagnosed every year.