



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Commerce

# Life Sciences West

## Western Australian Biotechnology Update

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Dear Bianca Africano

Welcome to the June 2009 edition of the Life Sciences West Newsletter.



### Screening to help find a cure to Floppy Baby Syndrome

Molecular Discovery Systems (MDSYSTEMS) research scientist Rachel Ramsdale is currently collaborating with the Laing Neuromuscular Diseases Group to screen medications that might increase heart actin in skeletal muscles. This screening could potentially offer a treatment for many patients born with Floppy Baby Syndrome.

In a world first, Western Australian scientists have recently cured mice of a devastating muscle disease that causes Floppy Baby Syndrome, a congenital myopathy disorder that causes babies to be born without the ability to properly use their muscles. The research has been published online in the *Journal of Cell Biology* and reveals how the team's efforts have cured mice born with the condition.

Lead author of the publication Dr Kristen Nowak said this was 'proof of principle' towards one day hopefully being able to better the lives of human patients.

The collaboration with MDSYSTEMS allows the screening of more than a thousand already approved medications. They are looking for one that might increase heart actin in skeletal muscles that could ultimately help thousands of families across the globe. The currently incurable genetic disease renders most of the affected children severely paralysed and takes the lives of many of these children before the age of one.

Both MDSYSTEMS and the Laing Neuromuscular Diseases Group are located at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research and have been collaborating on the French Muscular Dystrophy Association Grant since 2008. The grant will be brought to fruition by the involvement of the MDSYSTEMS sophisticated high-content screening and development facility.

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