



MELANOMA MATTERS

AUTUMN 2006



Welcome to the first edition of Melanoma Matters, the newsletter of the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre, based proudly within the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research.

It's now been just over a year since the Centre was launched in March 2005 in honour of Scott Kirkbride, who sadly lost his battle with melanoma in 2004 at the age of 27. In that time, so many people from within the Perth community, as well as many based interstate and overseas, have generously donated their time or money to help our cause. We are deeply grateful for the support and are thrilled to have this opportunity to say a public "thank you" to each and every one of you.

Fundraising events such as the Karrinyup Country Club's 'Inner Wheel' Fundraising Luncheon, the Prendiville family's English Channel swim and the ABC/Wembley Golf Complex Charity Golf Day were just some of the highlights in our first year. We would also like to thank the students of 'Tregonning House' Hale School for their efforts throughout 2005 in raising funds for melanoma research.

Our commitment to raise \$250,000 a year over the next five years was generously matched dollar for dollar by The University of Western Australia. We are extremely grateful to them for their contribution.

Under the leadership of Professor Lyle Palmer, and along with his team at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR), we look forward to an exciting year ahead in melanoma research in this State. At a time when melanoma rates are rising, it is our aim to develop the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre (SKMRC) into a world-class facility. With several fundraising events planned over the next few months, we look forward to your ongoing support.

With warmest regards,

Yvonne Kirkbride & Peter Klinken

WE'RE COMING ONLINE SOON

The SKMRC will soon have its own website to keep you up-to-date with all our latest news!

Please keep an eye out for us at www.skmrc.org.au

WA RESEARCHERS BEGIN AMBITIOUS NEW SKIN CANCER INITIATIVE



Research officer Lara McDonald conducting a skin check on melanoma survivor Trudy Smith

Researchers at WAIMR's Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre have begun an ambitious project that could revolutionise the diagnosis and treatment of melanoma.

A team from Professor Lyle Palmer's Laboratory for Genetic Epidemiology, led by research officer Lara McDonald, will be asking all newly-diagnosed melanoma patients in WA to volunteer to be part of the groundbreaking study. They would be asked to supply health information and a blood sample to allow researchers to probe the genetic and environmental causes of melanoma.

"Every year more than 1,000 West Australians get the devastating news that they have melanoma – we're hoping every one of them will want to help our quest to find out how to better understand and treat skin cancer," said Professor Palmer.

WAIMR Director and cancer researcher Professor Peter Klinken said, "This will be one of the most comprehensive projects of its type anywhere in the world and will ensure that WA is an international leader in skin cancer research."

Professor Palmer said one of the biggest problems with melanoma was that there were often very few visible symptoms until the cancer had progressed to a late stage.

"Finding better, less invasive options for diagnosing skin cancer earlier, such as with a blood test instead of biopsy, would likely be one of the spin-offs of this research," said Professor Palmer.

"There have been very few new breakthroughs in the treatment of melanoma, so we're hopeful that this project will also lead to advances in that area, which will ultimately save lives."

MICK LOSES HIS WILD LOCKS IN 'FUND-RAZOR'!



Mick Rae goes under the razor

Doubleview man Mick Rae lost his wild locks in March to raise more than \$10,000 for the SKMRC.

The 52-year-old labourer went under the razor at Wembley Golf Complex. Mick, who found out about the Centre through Scott's uncle, said he'd been raising money for cancer research every year since his cousin in South Africa had battled breast cancer.

"I believe one person can make a difference, you know we all say we can't do it, but we've done pretty well here," said Mick. "Even if you do one good thing in your life, and this is my good deed once a year". It took him just six weeks to raise the money – and just over half an hour to lose all the hair on his head and face – including his eyebrows!

We sincerely thank Mick, his brother-in-law Andrew Cameron (who also bravely shaved his head to help raise money!) and their friends, family and colleagues for such an amazing effort.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN TEENAGERS ASKED TO HELP WITH MOLES STUDY

The SKMRC is supporting a new research project that could help shed light on how to bring down skin cancer rates.

The study is being undertaken by Matthew Legge, a PhD student supervised by Professor Lyle Palmer and Dr Liz Milne at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research.

It will look for possible genetic causes of moles and how they might relate to melanoma, and will initially probe five genes believed to be linked to melanoma.

Matt said it was an area of research that had so far been given relatively little attention.

"We know that having a lot of moles is a strong risk factor for melanoma, but there's still a lot of mystery surrounding the genetic causes of them," he said.

"If we can find out what prompts their development, we might be able to move a step closer to uncovering the genetic causes of skin cancer and that would ultimately boost the chances of discovering more about how to prevent it, and how it can be treated more effectively."

Matt said the study would look at links that might exist between particular genes, the number of moles a child has, and factors such as skin type and hair colour, as well as the participant's UVR exposure.

"The ultimate goal in putting the genetics of moles and skin cancer under the microscope is that one day we may be able to use genetic testing to predict a person's likelihood of developing this insidious disease," he said.

Teenagers who previously took part in the landmark 'Kidskin' study, led by Dr Milne, will be approached to take part in this research.

THANK YOU!

The list of sponsors and donors to the SKMRC continues to grow and, while there are too many to name individually, we'd like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our key contributors. Instrumental in our ongoing success are The University of Western Australia, Amadeus, Merit Projects, Homeloans Ltd and the Wind Over Water Foundation.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Also, a big thanks to our board members Yvonne & Rob Kirkbride, Rob Scott, Rob Salmon, Peter Klinken and Graeme Morgan for donating their valuable time.

To find out how you can help, or to make a donation, call the Centre on (08) 9224 0333.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our next fundraiser is planned for April, with The SKMRC Annual Luncheon & Auction at Subiaco Oval. Mark Friday April 28th in your diary – and phone us on (08) 9224 0333 for further details.

CONTACT DETAILS

Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre within the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research

Phone: +61 8 9224 0333

Fax: +61 8 9224 0322

Email: lucycont@waimr.uwa.edu.au

Postal address:
Level 6, MRF Building
Rear 50 Murray St
Perth WA 6000
AUSTRALIA

www.skmrc.org.au

All donations to the Centre over \$2 are tax deductible.