



August 11th, 2005

## **WESTERN SUBURBS SIBLINGS IN HISTORIC CHARITY SWIM**

A group of seven siblings hailing from Perth's western suburbs have made it into the record books while swimming the English Channel for charity.

When the Prendiville family completed the 35 kilometre feat last month (on July 12), they become the largest group of siblings to cross the Channel – beating the previous record of five.

50-year-old Swanbourne GP Jamie Prendiville said two of his brothers who live in London first came up with the idea to cross the channel late last year – the challenge a sure-fire way of enticing their siblings to England for a reunion.

“There are 11 children in our family and seven of us decided to join in the swim,” said Dr Prendiville.

“Because it was a pretty unique event, we decided to use it as a fundraiser for a significant cause and by unanimous decision we decided to dedicate the swim to Scott Kirkbride and donate any money we raised to the Centre set up in his honour.”

The Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre was established earlier this year at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) in Nedlands.

“A friend and patient of mine, Scott Kirkbride, lost his life to melanoma late last year,” Dr Prendiville said.

“The crux of the matter which cemented our commitment to melanoma research was that Scotty Kirkbride was a magnificent example of a 27-year-old Australian, who could easily have been a brother or son to anyone in our family team.

“It also seemed right because melanoma has such a high incidence and mortality in Australia and is linked with sun exposure and we were taking part in swimming, which is of course an outdoor activity with significant sun exposure.”

As well as Jamie, the Prendiville family members to cross one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world were Mark, Michael, Garry, David, Patrick and their sister and Dalkeith mother-of-five Caroline.

The siblings range from 33 to 50 years of age.

Dr Prendiville said despite a big swell and strong winds, they made good time.

“Crossing the Channel took us 12 hours and 33 minutes – we each took turns swimming for an hour at a time as stipulated in the rules,” he said.

“It was pretty cold, about 14 or 15 degrees, but we'd been training in the Swan River when it had got down to around 11 degrees which was seriously cold.

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“This was particularly significant for my sister Caroline who was carrying very little body fat and suffered a degree of hypothermia during the swim.”

Swimmers crossing the Channel aren't allowed to wear wetsuits – only racing bathers.

The Prendiville family raised more than \$3,500 for the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Centre.

WAIMR Director Peter Klinken thanked the family for their enormous effort.

“Our aim is that the money raised by the Prendiville family's swim, and all other fundraising for the Centre, will help save lives,” he said.

“It will allow WAIMR scientists to investigate the genetic causes of skin cancer and hopefully help stop the scourge of the disease.”

Melanoma is one of the most deadly forms of cancer and Professor Klinken said it was becoming more prevalent.

“It's now ranked as the third most common form of cancer in Australia and is the cancer most likely to strike 15 to 39 year olds,” he said.

There are over 1,000 new cases diagnosed in WA each year.

The Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre was established in March.

It's been made possible through fundraising efforts by the Kirkbride family, their friends and a generous commitment by the University of WA to match the funding dollar for dollar over five years.

Donations to the Centre can be made by phoning WAIMR on (08) 9224 0333.

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