

Media release

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Insight into melanoma research

The Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre and the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research held a successful Melanoma Satellite Symposium in Perth today.

WA Chief Scientist, Professor Lyn Beazley, opened the event with a welcome and overview of the problem often referred to as the “Australian Cancer.”

“1.2 million Australians work outdoors,” she told the audience of clinicians, physicians and researchers, “and receive up to eight times more sunlight than those indoors.”

The plenary address was from the Director of the Melanoma Institute Australia, Professor John Thompson, who has returned to his home town of Perth from Sydney. He said the cancer struck people in the most productive years of their lives. Males had a 1 in 23 risk of contracting melanoma, while the female risk was 1 in 31.

“It’s an epidemic among elderly males in Australia,” he said, “and the incidence is continuing to rise worldwide. Why? It’s simplistic to think that it’s only due to more ultra violet light. There must be more to it than that.”

Professor Thompson outlined the latest melanoma treatments, which are proving successful among his patients, including Rose Bengal dye which passes through the cell membrane, destroying tumour cells but not normal cells, allowing faster healing of the surrounding tissues.

Professor Meenhard Herlyn, who gave the keynote address, had travelled from Philadelphia in the United States, and outlined his cancer centre’s molecular and cellular oncogenesis program as well as the use of tumour stem cells to generate ‘synthetic skin’ .

The Melanoma Satellite Symposium was organised by Dr Carolyn Williams, whose roles include being the Manager of the Centre for Food and Genomic Medicine at WAIMR as well as research manager of the Scott Kirkbride Melanoma Research Centre.

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