



women & infants
research foundation
Western Australia

Media Release

New drug to prevent preterm birth

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Women and Infants Research Foundation's (WIRF) Professor Jeffrey Keelan and his research team are investigating a new antibiotic drug that could dramatically reduce the number of babies born preterm.

The research team, based in the University of Western Australia (UWA) School of Women's and Infants' Health (SWIH) at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH), have discovered that Solithromycin is the first antibiotic of its kind capable of crossing the placenta, providing effective antibacterial protection for a baby in utero.

Professor Keelan said "while it is known that infection of the womb in mid to late pregnancy can cause early preterm birth, antibiotic treatment in pregnancy has generally been ineffective at reducing the rates of premature births or improving the health of preterm infants. Current antibiotics used, such as erythromycin, often fail to kill the particular bacteria that cause the infection, or do not cross the placenta to reach levels effective to protect the baby".

"Solithromycin crosses the placenta with an efficiency of 40 to 60 percent and is 10 to 100 times stronger than older antibiotics used (macrolides). The new drug is also highly effective against the bacteria most commonly known to infect the uterus, and able to overcome antibiotic resistance in these organisms due to its' cleverly designed structure", said Professor Keelan.

Solithromycin, manufactured by USA Company Cempra Inc, is still undergoing development and is not yet available commercially. WIRF's research team plans to start clinical trials of the new drug in the near future.

Professor Jeffery Keelan is the Deputy Director of the Women and Infants Research Foundation and the Director of the Women's and Newborn Health Research Network at King Edward Memorial Hospital. He is also the Head of the School of Women's and Infants' Health Research Laboratories, and Coordinator of Graduate Research.



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