

WIRF's VISION is for all Western Australian women to enjoy the best health for themselves, their pregnancies and their babies.



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Preterm Birth Special Edition

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DISCOVERING HOW TO PREVENT PRETERM BIRTH

Each year, nearly 3000 Western Australian children are born too early. Most will go on to live normal and productive lives, but many will be left with lifelong consequences.

For several decades, research conducted by ourselves and many others has made preterm birth much safer, but we now need to find how to stop this problem from occurring in the first place. Discovering how to prevent preterm birth is one of our highest priorities.

One of the strongest pieces of evidence suggesting that many cases of preterm birth may be preventable comes from our observations that women have different risks of early birth when they migrate from one country to another. Clearly, factors involved in changing lifestyle and environment influence risk.

There are many possible paths that may lead a pregnant woman to give birth



prematurely. Each of these requires different strategies as regards clinical care and directing research aiming at prevention. WIRF researchers have focussed heavily on our understanding that many of the very early cases of preterm birth are caused by infection and inflammation. The story however is very complicated. The organisms are different from those that we deal with in general cases of infection. And responses of the immune systems of the mother and unborn baby are involved but not yet fully understood.

We are however making significant progress. Important information is being discovered and we anticipate that the mysteries of how inflammation can cause preterm birth will be uncovered in the next few years.

WIRF researchers are also investigating several of the other pathways leading to early birth. You can expect to hear much more about this in 2014.

The problem of early preterm birth will be solved by modern medicine – we just need to make it happen sooner rather than later.



WELCOME

*to the December issue
of WIRF News*

The Women and Infants Research Foundation has dual but equally important roles. First, it functions as an independent research organisation, conducting and supporting scientific research of the highest international standard. Second, it functions as a charity, linked to the community and providing services for the patients and staff of the hospital. These dual roles are complementary and together provide a vibrant base underpinning quality health care for the women, babies and families of Western Australia.

The Foundation does not work in isolation. It enjoys close affiliations with King Edward Memorial Hospital and The University of Western Australia, as well as partnering with many other academic and community organisations that assist in achieving the overall goal of improving health care.

In this edition of the Newsletter, you can find details of how progress is being made by WIRF researchers in the field of prevention of preterm birth; the outcome of the Orange Seed Project in which WIRF was a finalist; the World Premmie Baby Day Family Picnic; Telethon; the Everest Challenge for Premis; and the Designer Donations Campaign.

I trust you will find the Newsletter informative and enjoyable.

Professor John Newnham AM
Executive Director



PRETERM PLACENTA INFLAMMATION STUDY

Many babies are born too early because of an infection in their mother's uterus. Unfortunately we can't diagnose this until labour has started. We also don't know the best way to treat these infections, and prevent early labour, allowing the baby to be born at full term. But, the placenta may hold the key.

Infections cause inflammation (e.g. redness, swelling, and pain) which triggers early labour. We know that this reaction in the placenta is caused by chemicals known as cytokines. Dr Ireland and Professor Keelan are studying a new group of drugs that block cytokines, which they hope will help stop early labour.

Dr Ireland is collecting placentas from women who give birth early and is testing the effects of the cytokine blocking drugs. So far, she has shown two of these drugs to prevent the effects of inflammation in the placenta. These two drugs are now being tested further to see if they will help prevent early labour.

Dr Ireland is also investigating ways of identifying women who may be at an increased risk of early labour due to infection. If we can identify these

women before labour begins, we will be able to treat them early and hopefully prevent infection-related preterm birth.



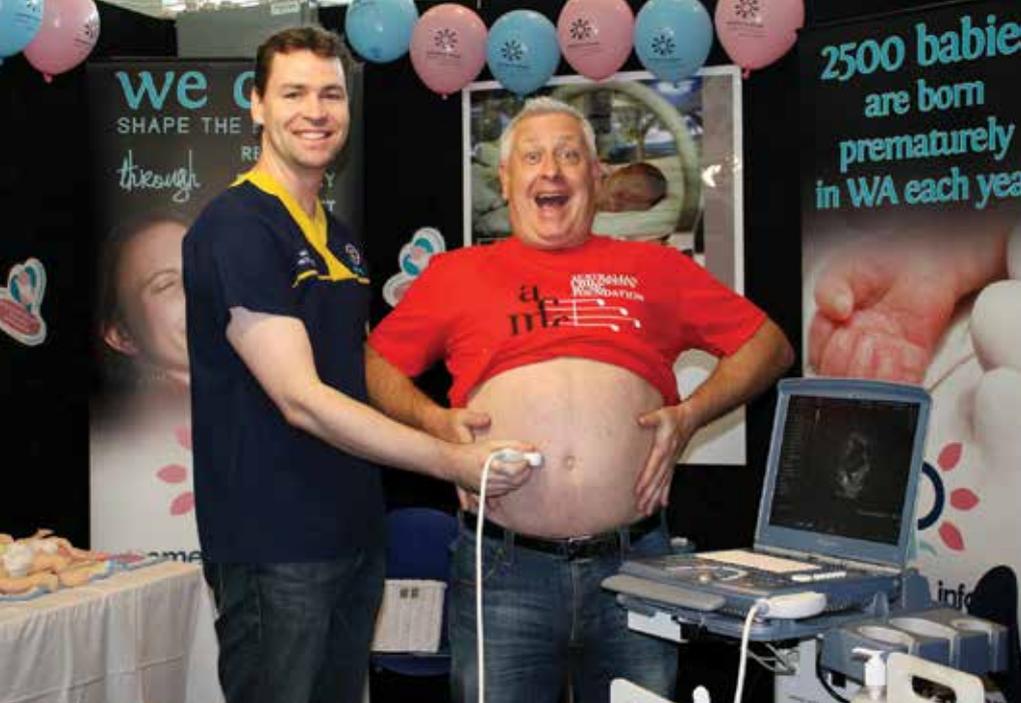
Dr Demelza Ireland: a short bio

Research Assistant Professor Demelza Ireland has a background in immunology research. She joined the research team at WIRF in August 2012 to investigate new ways of blocking infection-related inflammation within the uterus that leads to preterm labour and delivery.

ORANGE SEED PROJECT

WIRF recently became one of ten lucky finalists to be selected for the Orange Seed Project (a joint initiative between Jack in the Box marketing and The West Australian Newspaper group).

As finalists we received a generous prize of \$20K worth of advertising and \$1K donation package from The West Australia Newspaper Group; a fabulous prize to kick start our Preterm Birth Initiative



TELETHON 2013

WIRF received its first Telethon grant in 1975 for a highly technical piece of equipment called a 'computer' which was shipped in parts from Germany.

Since then the Channel 7 Telethon Trust has been a stalwart supporter of WIRF's work. Last year we received support for a number of studies focussing on optimising pre-natal and post-natal health, with the ultimate objective of maximising

health of the next generation of Western Australians. You can read about one of the studies funded on page 2.

Attending the Telethon weekend is always fun and eventful. We're so grateful for Telethon's support and this is our opportunity to show everyone how their support is used.

Pictured above: Scott White and 'Dicko', 19th October 2013.

READY FOR A CHALLENGE IN 2014?

THE SUNSMART WOMEN'S TRIATHLON

The next SunSmart Women's Triathlon will be held on Sunday 16th March, 2014 at Hillarys.

WIRF is a beneficiary of this great event and would like to enter lots of teams to assist in raising funds for, and awareness of our research. So get your running, swimming and cycling friends together and start training!

HBF Members receive a 15% discount off their online entry fees and WIRF Team participants who fundraise over \$50 each will receive a complimentary WIRF running shirt.

See www.wirf.com.au/triathlon for more details and registrations for the Women's Triathlon.

EVEREST CHALLENGE FOR PREMS

In April 2014 Garry Williams aims to fulfil his lifelong ambition of climbing to the top of the World - Mount Everest.

If successful, it will be a great accomplishment but equally important to Garry, is marking this once in a lifetime event with a fundraising campaign that will truly change the future. Supporting research into preterm birth will help identify issues before birth and change the outcome of women at risk resulting in healthy pregnancies and babies. To follow Garry's expedition preparation and the Everest challenge please visit:

<http://www.mycause.com.au/page/premiebabiesmounteverestchallenge>



Campaign. Part of our application process was to produce a video demonstrating how the support would be used – WIRF's video features some wonderful families

who have experienced preterm birth and talks about WIRF's Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative. Thanks to everyone who voted for us.

In case you missed it the first time, you can view it at <http://wirf.com.au/orangeseedproject>



women & infants
research foundation
Western Australia

& IN OTHER news



Keira Bury with her daughter Frances pictured in our Op Shop

DESIGNER DONATIONS

This Spring, the Women and Infants Research Foundation held a Designer Donation campaign to source some lovely pre-loved clothing for our Opportunity Shop.

We partnered with Playgroup WA to encourage local playgroups to sort through their unwanted baby and maternity items, and donate them to our Op Shop which raises funds for WIRF's research. There were some gorgeous donations, but there could only be one winner.

Our winning group, 'Mummies R Us' from the Bayswater Playgroup, enjoyed a festive afternoon tea, clothing vouchers from Uber & Klein and Ball & Skittle and a group photography voucher from WIRF's First Photographer.

Thank you to all who donated their gorgeous pre-loved clothing and baby items to our Designer Donation campaign. Our Op Shop is open from Monday to Thursday 9.30am-12.30pm if you want to check out the great new stock!

We're also looking for Op Shop volunteers, see www.wirf.com.au/volunteer for more information.



Telethon supports WIRF research that will change our world



Kelly (Beyond Bank), Shan (WIRF Volunteer), Chris, Andrea, Tina, Lynne and Sarah (WIRF) and Tuija (Beyond Bank)



Clint and Eva celebrating their raffle win!

WORLD PREMMIE DAY PICNIC

Sunday 17th November 2013 was the perfect day for a family picnic at Matilda Bay Reserve. The picnic was held to raise awareness about premature birth and support World Prematurity Day.

Everyone had a great time - kids were entertained with face painting, fun activities and 'The Lulus' and adults enjoyed a relaxing morning with happy children and a delicious sausage sizzle. Make a note in the diary for Sunday 16th November 2014 for the next family picnic. Funds raised from the picnic go towards the Foundation's research into preterm birth prevention.

With thanks to everyone who attended, and to our sponsors

(Beyond Bank and Medela), and supporters (Perth Zoo, The Regal Theatre, Guest Branch Management for the baby equipment and products, The Lulu's, Bunnings, DEC and Matilda Bay Reserve).

We would also like to thank Amber Bates Photography, our volunteers Madalyn and Chantel for their support, and everyone who helped us to spread the word including Buggy Buddy's, Playgroup WA and Kids in Perth Paper.

DONATIONS

Christmas and the New Year is a great time to donate to a cause close to your heart. WIRF is raising funds for two important initiatives: *Preterm Birth Prevention Initiative*: this will save the lives of thousands of babies in our state and give them what every baby deserves - a healthy start to life; and the *Gynaecological Oncology Research Initiative*: the aim of this initiative is to build a solid research base around the existing clinical service to discover the causes of gynaecological cancers. Please help us to prevent and cure these conditions by donating to WIRF using the donation slip enclosed or by making an online donation at the WIRF website.