



PROUDLY SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH
ALL NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

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Local biomarker research a key part of MSWA's record \$3 million investment

For the thousands of Western Australians living with multiple sclerosis (MS) new treatments offer hope and relief. But for clinicians it's often challenging to know if a particular treatment is working.

Currently clinicians use methods such as MRIs or the monitoring of clinical symptoms to assess whether a treatment for MS is effective, or if the condition is progressing. However, these methods are expensive or time-consuming.

With funding from MSWA, Professor Allan Kermode, Head of Demyelinating Diseases Research at the Perron Institute, is carrying out research into the potential of neurofilament light (NfL) to be used as a biomarker of MS activity, using a simple blood test.

"NfL is a nerve protein that is a component of nerve cells," said Professor Kermode. "When nerve cells die, the presence of NfL can be detected in the blood stream. What we're doing is analysing NfL levels in patients' blood to work out whether it's a useful biomarker as a predictor of MS activity and progression."

Professor Kermode said the progression of MS varies widely from one person to another and so does their response to various treatments.

"Specific blood tests will not only permit more timely and precise assessment of the response of MS to treatment, as well as help guide personalised pharmacotherapy, but they will also accelerate the development of new therapies, especially those that may arrest clinical progression," Professor Kermode said.

The work being carried out by Professor Kermode is part of the record \$3 million MSWA is investing this year into neurological research projects by local, national and international researchers.

"In a world-first, biomarker testing for NfL will be carried out in people with Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS) who have undergone narrowband UVB therapy," Professor Kermode added.

"People with CIS have experienced a first episode of neurological symptoms that could progress to MS. As part of this research, one group has been treated with narrowband UVB phototherapy and the other hasn't. The NfL levels of each group will be compared to determine the effect of the UVB phototherapy on conversion to full MS.

"The funding from MSWA will enable the Demyelinating Diseases Research program to advance a range of initiatives that would otherwise be beyond our reach."



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As well as Professor Kermode's research, MSWA's record-breaking funding will be allocated across a number of institutions this year, including \$1 million to MS Research Australia and \$500,000 to the International Progressive MS Alliance.

The money will also be invested in a research project that evaluates the molecular and immunological aspects of MS, employing a senior research fellow and MS nurse, and migrating data onto an Australia-wide MSBase platform.

MSWA is the largest funder of research into MS in Australia. CEO Marcus Stafford AM said this year's unprecedented investment was only made possible by the people of Western Australia's ongoing support.

"We're committed to improving the quality of life for people with MS and other neurological conditions," said Mr Stafford.

"Pleasingly, we have been able to increase year-on-year the amount of money we've invested into research and spent on providing support, services and accommodation across the State. And, it's something we want to continue to be able to do for many years to come.

"I would like to thank everyone who made a donation, took part in one of our events, or bought a ticket in the Mega Home Lottery. Because of you, we've been able to support the Perron Institute and other brilliant medical research organisations that offer hope to people living with MS and other neurological conditions."

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