



**Western Australian Institute
for Medical Research**

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MEDIA STATEMENT

AUSTRALIAN SCIENTISTS EDGING CLOSER TO TYPE 1 DIABETES CURE

A visiting Melbourne researcher who discovered the cells that give rise to the body's insulin-producing cells says scientists are edging closer to developing a cure for Type 1 diabetes.

Dr Fang-Xu Jiang from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research has defined islet stem cells, which form beta cells in the pancreas that secrete insulin.

In Type 1 diabetes, the pancreas cannot produce insulin because these cells are destroyed by the body's own immune system.

He's told a seminar at the Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR) that the cells hold hope of curing patients with Type 1 diabetes.

"If we can generate unlimited numbers of beta cells – either in the laboratory or by stimulating the development of the patient's own beta cells within their body – we can potentially use them to cure this disease and we're constantly making new advances so it's a possibility that is becoming more real all the time," said Dr Jiang.

"Not only could this work lead to breakthroughs in Type 1 Diabetes – a disease that has doubled in incidence in the last 30 years in Australia – it could also prove useful for treating some cases of Type 2 diabetes.

"We are also hopeful our research could lead to the discovery of stem cells for other tissues."

Professor Grant Morahan, the Diabetes Research Foundation's Professor of Diabetes Research, based at WAIMR said this was world-leading work.

"The fact that discoveries like this are being made in Australia is further evidence that we are becoming a global powerhouse in medical research," he said.

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**For more information please contact:
Natalie Papadopoulos, WAIMR Media Consultant on M: 0407 984 435**