

ASMR Medical Research Week® Student Prize Winners

Two local residents, Amanda Meade of Beechboro and Belinda Brown of Noranda were among 15 medical researchers who shared in over \$16000 of prizes presented at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Friday night.

Ms Meade a PhD student at UWA, based at the Centre for Neuromuscular and Neurological Disorders UWA, was awarded for her work into the use of peptides to protect cultured brain cells from injury.

‘In the future, we hope this research may be the foundation of a new way of treating the devastating brain injuries that can occur after head injury and stroke’ said Ms Meade.

The Director General of Health, Dr Peter Flett presented Ms Meade the Department of Health award.

Miss Brown’s research at the School of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience at UWA identified a link between exercise and the levels of the toxic protein, beta-amyloid, associated with Alzheimer’s disease.

‘Our findings indicate that physical activity can alter Alzheimer’s Disease risk factors and may directly delay the progression of the disease by lowering plasma beta-amyloid levels’ Miss Brown said.

Miss Brown was awarded the Western Australian Institute of Medical Research prize by Professor Nigel Laing

Last week more than 60 postgraduate and early-career medical researchers presented their work at the Scientific Symposium at Curtin University.

‘The symposium reminds us of the talent of our young medical researchers in WA who are continually searching for medical breakthroughs that could help us all’ said Dr Shelley Gorman, Convener of ASMR WA

The Australian Society for Medical Research is the peak professional society representing Australian health and medical research with a longstanding role in public, political and scientific advocacy.

Media welcome. Photos and interviews available.

For more information, please contact:

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WA ASMR Media Representative

ASMR Medical Research Week® Prize Winners

Three local residents, Amanda Cleaver of Belmont, Alison McDonnell of Rivervale and Ireni Ali Rahman of South Perth were among 15 medical researchers who shared in over \$16000 of prizes presented at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Friday Night.

Dr Cleaver presented her research findings into immunotherapy against mesothelioma. 'New cancer treatments are being developed to boost immune cells in the body that recognise and destroy tumour cells. However, tumours have evolved many ways of evading immune destruction. Our research has discovered why some immune therapies may have limited efficacy,' said Dr Cleaver.

Mrs McDonnell recently completed her PhD investigating how the immune system responds to chemotherapy. Mrs McDonnell was awarded the Murdoch University Prize by Professor Jim Reynoldson.

Dr Cleaver and Mrs McDonnell both work within the School of Medicine and Pharmacology, UWA and the National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases.

Miss Ali Rahman, a PhD Student at the Centre for Ophthalmology and Visual Science at UWA, won the ECU prize for her studies into diabetic retinopathy. Miss Ali Rahman has developed a model for studying hyperglycaemia and the molecular factors which contribute to damage to the retina of the eye and loss of vision and blindness.

Last week more than 60 postgraduate and early-career medical researchers presented their work at the Scientific Symposium at Curtin University.

It is crucial that our young scientists get the opportunity to present their exciting medical research findings at interstate and international conferences, and these awards help facilitate the best in Perth to be able to do so.' said Dr Kristen Nowak, ASMR director and winner of the Premier's Science Prize for Early Career Development (2007).

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Prizewinners Guardian express

Two local residents, Elizabeth Thomas of East Perth and Eleanor Woodward of North Perth were among 15 medical researchers who shared in over \$16 000 of prizes presented at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Friday Night.

The Right Honourable Lord Mayor of Perth Lisa Scaffidi awarded UWA PhD Student Miss Thomas a cash prize for her outstanding presentation at this year's ASMR MRW® Scientific Symposium

Miss Thomas has identified cells in human breast milk that when grown in culture appear to be able to organise themselves into milk secreting units. This provides a model system for the study of breast development.

'People sometimes forget that breasts are for making milk, not for getting cancer. Our aim is to learn more about how the cells in the breast differentiate in normal development and functioning. We hope this knowledge will help us to understand why the normal process becomes unregulated and results in cancer' Miss Thomas said.

Ms Woodward, a Murdoch University PhD student studying at the Telethon Institute of Child Health Research, was awarded the UWA prize by Professor Ian Puddey.

'My research has identified genes that are 'switched on' by the molecule IL-4 in human blood cells and these are important because they may have a role in regulating inflammation' said Ms Woodward.

Earlier this week more than 60 postgraduate and early-career medical researchers presented their work at the Scientific Symposium at Curtin University.

'The diversity of the topics and the exceptional standard of presentations at the Symposium is a testament that health and medical research is alive and well in Western Australia,' said Dr Kristen Nowak, ASMR director and winner of the Premier's Science Prize for Early Career Development (2007).

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Joanne Lisciandro and Mathew Welch were among 15 medical researchers who shared in over \$16000 of prizes presented at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Friday night.

Mr Welch, a PhD student at Curtin University and based at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research, is investigating the role of a growth factor in the development of paediatric leukaemia.

‘The Connective Tissue Growth Factor (CTGF) is produced abundantly in several solid tumors. We wanted to find out the role of the CTGF gene in acute lymphoblastic leukaemia and how the expression of this gene is modified in disease states’ said Mr Welch.

The Director General of Health, Dr Peter Flett presented Mr Welch the Department of Health award.

Miss Lisciandro is UWA student also studying towards her PhD. She is researching the differences between how the immune system functions at birth and in the first year of life in children born in Papua New Guinea and Australia.

‘This research will allow us to better understand the factors that contribute to high childhood morbidity and mortality rates from infectious diseases in developing countries like Papua New Guinea, and contribute to the development of improved prevention strategies for combating childhood disease on a global level’ said Miss Lisciandro.

Last week more than 60 postgraduate and early-career medical researchers presented their work at the Scientific Symposium at Curtin University.

"The ASMR believes that investing and encouraging our young, up-and-coming local talent is vital for a successful future in medical research in WA’ said Dr Kristen Nowak, ASMR director and winner of the Premier’s Science Prize for Early Career Development (2007).

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Local resident Jane Cross of Bullsbrook was among 15 medical researchers who shared in over \$16000 of prizes presented at the ASMR MRW® Gala Dinner at the Perth Convention Exhibition Centre on Friday night.

Ms Cross a PhD student at UWA, based at the Centre for Neuromuscular and Neurological Disorders UWA, was awarded for her research into the role a protein, the Sodium Calcium Exchanger, and whether it impacts on how brain cells die after stroke.

Stroke affects more than 50,000 Australians per year and is the leading single cause of disability and second greatest cause of death after heart disease in Australia. If we can understand why the brain cells die and devise a treatment, we could reduce the brain damage following stroke. This will reduce the devastating neurological effects it can cause to patients and the monetary cost to the Australian community.' said Ms Cross.

Ms Cross was awarded Orthocell prize presented by Paul Anderson

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'The symposium reminds us of the talent of our young medical researchers in WA who are continually searching for medical breakthroughs that could help us all' said Dr Shelley Gorman, Convener of ASMR WA

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