

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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First class of research leaders might find a faster cure type one diabetes

A world first program designed to support medical researchers in type one diabetes develop their leadership skills to help translate their innovations out of the lab and into the real world has completed its first intake. The investigators, announced in Canberra today, have already put their skills into practice, securing funding to look at a dietary supplement that could stop type one diabetes.

In the increasingly competitive world of medical discovery, researchers are having to become as adept in the boardroom as they are in the lab. To support the next generation of medical research leaders to develop collaborative skills and translate their innovative research into practice, JDRF established the Future Research Leaders Program (FRLP) with support from the Macquarie Group Foundation.

As the final outcome of this program, the researchers had to come together and design an innovative research project that put the skills they learned into practice and meet the high standard for securing research funding through the Australian Research Council's Special Research Initiative (SRI) in Type 1 Diabetes. The SRI funds the Australian Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network (CRN), administered by JDRF.

This group of researchers are working together to look at a modified starch and its potential role in the prevention and treatment of type one diabetes in humans. The starch has already proven by the principal investigator, Dr Eliana Marino, to stop type one diabetes in mice. Now, it will be tested for safety in humans with type one diabetes for the very first time. The group have been awarded \$350,000 in funding, with \$250,000 provided by the CRN and \$100,000 by the Macquarie Group Foundation.

Commenting on the program, JDRF CEO Mike Wilson said "We want our best young researchers focused on research. However, the reality of modern science means there are also elements of administration, management and commercial interaction, all of which helps takes science out of the lab and into the community where it is needed. The program aims to arm our researchers with the tools and skills needed for this and we're delighted to see they have put it to good work already."

"This kind of research has the potential to revolutionise our understanding of type one diabetes, how it starts and what we can do to stop it. We are incredibly fortunate in Australia that we have partners like the Australian Government and the Macquarie Group Foundation to help us support researcher development, and a program like the CRN that can support these research with vital research funds" Mr Wilson said.

Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said the Turnbull Government's \$35 million commitment to the Special Research Initiative in Type 1 Diabetes was helping back the next generation of medical research leaders.

"I congratulate the graduates from the first Future Leaders Program and they are testament to the quality of the next generation of researchers in Australia," Minister Birmingham said.

“The Turnbull Government’s strong budget management means we can back essential services like the life-changing research and researchers of the JDRF’s Clinical Research Network which gives us all great hope for the future health of all Australians. I look forward to seeing the results of this exciting research over time.”

Minister for Health Greg Hunt said Australia had a strong culture of supporting research and innovation.

“Medical research is about saving lives and protecting lives.”

“The Turnbull Government will continue to back our world-leading Australian researchers to deliver better health outcomes for all Australian patients.”

“Today’s graduates are among Australia’s best and we look forward to the results of their research into this important health issue,” Minister Hunt said.

The researchers hope to publish their first research findings in 2019 with the next step being to test if this dietary supplement can prevent or reverse type one diabetes in humans.

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About JDRF and type 1 diabetes

JDRF is the leading global organisation funding type 1 diabetes (T1D) research. JDRF Australia is built on a grassroots model of people connecting in their local communities, collaborating regionally for efficiency and broader fundraising impact, and uniting on an international stage to pool resources, passion and energy. Our mission is to accelerate life-changing breakthroughs to cure, prevent and treat T1D and its complications. To accomplish this, JDRF has invested nearly \$2 billion since our inception. We collaborate with academic institutions, policymakers, and corporate and industry partners to develop and deliver a pipeline of innovative therapies to people living with T1D. Our staff and volunteers in seven countries are dedicated to advocacy, community engagement and our vision of a world without T1D. For more information, please visit jdrf.org.au.

About the Australian Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network (T1DCRN)

The Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network (T1DCRN) is an innovative clinical research program led by JDRF Australia and funded by a Special Research Initiative through the Australian Research Council (ARC). The T1DCRN’s goal is to accelerate patient benefit through supporting the most promising research projects, promoting and retaining outstanding scientists and attracting new researchers to the field of type 1 diabetes research.

About the JDRF/Macquarie Group Foundation Future Research Leaders Program (FRLP)

A new and unique initiative, the FRLP will identify and support promising type 1 diabetes researchers in the early to mid-stages of their careers (EMCRs). Participation will provide these high-potential EMCRs with new skills, enhanced professional progress and unmatched access to lead diabetes researchers from Australia and overseas, thanks to JDRF’s network. The FRLP was made possible thanks to a three-year grant from the Macquarie Group Foundation. The first group of participants involved in the collaborative research project are:



- Dr Eliana Marino – Monash University
- Dr Kirstine Bell – Charles Perkins Centre, University of Sydney
- A/Prof Sonia Saad – Kolling Institute, University of Sydney
- Dr Emma Hamilton-Williams – University of Queensland Diamantina Institute
- Dr Esteban Gurzov – Universite libre de Bruxelles
- Dr Phillip Bedggood – University of Melbourne