

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**1 DECEMBER 2006**

## **PERTH PHYSICIAN UNVEILS GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH ON WORLD AIDS DAY**

A unique approach by a Perth research team is holding out the promise of preventing the spread of HIV-AIDS through the development of vaccines custom designed for regions around world.

Murdoch University and Royal Perth Hospital's Centre for Clinical Immunology and Biological Statistics (CCIBS) Executive Director Professor Simon Mallal used today's World AIDS Day to announce two new significant international research collaborations to assist its pioneering work.

"The world's best chance of reversing and ultimately halting the HIV epidemic is to find a vaccine – our team in Perth is playing a key role in this effort," Professor Mallal said.

"We are designing vaccines tailored to the genetics of the people and the virus which vary from nationality to nationality and country to country. This research is centred on the recognition that HIV mutates in an individual according to that person's own DNA."

Professor Mallal said the global death toll from HIV-AIDS was staggering – more than three million people died from AIDS in 2006 and the disease was on the rise in many countries, including our neighbour Papua New Guinea.

The recent collaboration with the international Centre for HIV-AIDS Vaccine Immunology (CHAVI) will see Professor Mallal and his team play a vital role in a seven year, \$300 million pioneering collaboration with the United States and Europe's HIV-AIDS experts. The project will research what the immune system does during HIV infection – including in the rare individuals who control the infection on their own – to help produce a vaccine to mimic those responses. Scientists involved in the project believe that by next year they will be able to identify the common genes that affect how the body responds to HIV – a vital step in developing a vaccine.

Professor Mallal's group also received more than \$930,000 from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation as part of an international European collaborative to develop a HIV vaccine using pox-virus 'carrier' proteins.

Since its establishment in 2000, the CCIBS has received more than \$25 million in private and public research funds, including \$12 million from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and \$5.6 million from the National Health and Medical Research Council. It has enjoyed enormous success with its unique blend of expertise in clinical medicine, basic science, mathematics and computing to focus on contemporary clinical problems in HIV.

Professor Mallal has also been recognised on the world stage for his breakthrough research in developing tests that identify which patients would suffer severe and sometimes life threatening reactions to one of the most common drugs used to treat HIV-AIDS. This has provided one of the first real life applications of personalised medicine based on the genetic type of an individual. CCIBS is a collaborative research centre between Murdoch University and Royal Perth Hospital, where it is based.

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