

Media Statement

5 July, 2023

Major Breakthrough in MS Research: MSWA Commends Perron Institute's Groundbreaking Contribution to Identifying First Genetic Marker for MS Severity

MSWA, a leading WA based charity which supports people living with multiple sclerosis (MS) and other neurological conditions, applauds the Perron Institute for its significant role in unveiling the first genetic marker associated with MS severity, as part of an international study. This groundbreaking discovery not only furthers our understanding of MS but also holds the potential to revolutionise the development of effective treatments for long-term disability in individuals affected by this chronic disease of the central nervous system.

MS is a complex condition characterised by the immune system mistakenly attacking the brain and spinal cord, leading to relapses and progressive degeneration. Thanks to multi-centre, collaborative efforts with international partners, we now have a crucial piece of the puzzle in the form of the first genetic variant associated with MS severity.

The landmark study, published in the prestigious journal *Nature*, involved the participation of over 22,000 individuals with MS from around the world. Professor Kermode heads Demyelinating Diseases Research at the Perron Institute and Centre for Molecular Medicine and Innovative Therapeutics at Murdoch University. Dr Fabis-Pedrini is an MSWA funded Senior Research Fellow in the team. Both are named as WA co-authors for this international study.

Professor Kermode, also funded by MSWA, remarked, "The results have flung wide open the door to the intricate mechanisms underlying MS, forging an entirely new path to develop treatments that enhance recovery and halt disease progression."

Dr. Fabis-Pedrini, acknowledged the significance of identifying the genetic variant associated with MS severity. She stated this "important advance is a step towards new drug discovery, with the aim of preserving the wellbeing of people living with MS." MSWA commends Dr. Fabis-Pedrini and the entire research team at the Perron Institute for their dedication and groundbreaking achievements.

To delve deeper into the far-reaching implications of this revolutionary research, MSWA's Chief of Marketing, Tony Millar, will be conducting an interview with Dr. Fabis-Pedrini at MSWA's annual Client Forum on Thursday, 6 July. This interview provides MSWA Client attendees an exceptional opportunity to gain profound insights into the study and its potential impact on the future of MS treatments.

MSWA CEO, Melanie Kiely: "The latest data on MS in Australia is a timely reminder of the impact this and other neurological conditions have on individuals and families. MSWA is committed to empowering people to live their best lives and providing the best possible support. We continue to work hard with the Western Australian community on our fundraising efforts."

Earlier this year, a report commissioned by MS Australia provided insights into the impact of MS on individuals, families, and the wider community, highlighting the need for increased funding and research.

According to the report, 33,335 Australians were living with MS in 2021, with 3,040 based in Western Australia. That is up from 25,607 and 2,219 respectively in 2017.

MSWA remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting research endeavours aimed at enhancing the lives of individuals living with MS. MSWA's total contribution to research has reached over \$34 million over the past decade.

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About MSWA

MSWA provides vital support and services to people living with neurological conditions in Western Australia. This includes people living with multiple sclerosis (MS), stroke, Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease, motor neuron disease, and acquired brain injury, to name a few.

MSWA is a non-government, not-for-profit organisation. The money we raise through our fundraising efforts, government grants and other income generating programs goes to providing a range of supports and services to people living with neurological conditions.

Our team of experienced nursing and allied health professionals provide information and a range of support from the time of diagnosis. All MSWA programs are delivered in accordance with both the Disability Service Standards and our own service standards.

In addition to our direct care services, we also provide funding for vital research projects into neurological conditions. For further information on research projects MSWA currently funds visit: <https://mswa.org.au/news-research/commitment-to-research>

Report cited: <https://www.msaustralia.org.au/news/multiple-sclerosis-rising-and-accelerating-in-australia-new-data-shows/>

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