

Australia's largest study on the causes of Type 1 Diabetes receives \$8m boost

JDRF Australia's Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network (T1DCRN) partners with the Helmsley Charitable Trust to expand unique ENDIA study

JDRF Australia has today announced that a prestigious new international partner has invested in the T1DCRN, a JDRF Australia initiative. The agreement between The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust (Helmsley Charitable Trust), the world's largest private foundation funder for type 1 diabetes-related initiatives, and JDRF Australia, will provide AUD \$8 million for a ground-breaking study to help solve the mystery of what causes type 1 diabetes.

The T1DCRN is supported by the Australian Government through a \$35 million grant awarded as a *Special Research Initiative for Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes* through the Australian Research Council.

Highlights

- Australian research attracts and secures international investment thanks to JDRF's global leadership and Australian Government support
- AUD \$8 million in funding thanks to multi-million dollar grants from the Helmsley Charitable Trust and the Australian Government-funded ARC Special Research Initiative, led by JDRF Australia
- Funding will enable completion of recruitment of 1,400 pregnant women to the Environmental Determinants of Islet Autoimmunity (ENDIA) study, Australia's largest study into the causes of type 1 diabetes
- This is the only study of its kind in the southern hemisphere, and is expected to contribute important new insight to the global mystery surrounding the causes of type 1 diabetes

Australia's unique ENDIA study will investigate 1,400 pregnant women and their babies across Australia whose unborn or newborn baby has an immediate relative with type 1 diabetes. This may be the mother herself, or the baby's father or a sibling. It is Australia's largest study into the causes of type 1 diabetes. The new funding for ENDIA will enable researchers to complete recruitment for the study in major hospitals across the country, as well as funding new scientific investigations in Australia's leading research institutes and universities.

ENDIA aims to identify the environmental factors, together with a person's genes, that may influence the development of type 1 diabetes. "We believe children are exposed to the environmental triggers that lead to type 1 diabetes very early in life – perhaps even before they're born," says the study's Principal Investigator, Professor Jenny Couper from the University of Adelaide and the Women's and Children's Hospital.

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Speaking about the partnership, Dr. Dorota Pawlak, Head of Research Development at JDRF Australia and Director of the T1DCRN said, “It is thanks to the world-leading excellence of Australian research and researchers, as well as the Australian Government’s investment in the T1DCRN that has enabled us to attract international investment from such a highly respected partner, the Helmsley Charitable Trust.

“This funding injection will have a transformational impact on the scope and outcomes of the ENDIA study with the potential to accelerate patient benefit for more than 120,000 Australians with type 1 diabetes, and millions of other patients around the world,” she continued.

ENDIA investigator Professor Len Harrison, from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne said, “We were selected by the Helmsley Charitable Trust because it recognised the originality and quality of this Australian research on the origins of type 1 diabetes. There is a growing realisation that many diseases have their origins in early life. The ENDIA study is the first study in the world to apply high-tech science from early pregnancy to understand how genes and environment interact to cause type 1 diabetes”.

The Helmsley Charitable Trust is the world’s 27th largest charitable trust. It aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional non-profits that are aligned with its mission. This will be the first time the Helmsley Trust has invested in Australian research.

“We are delighted to support JDRF Australia in further leveraging the Australian Government’s significant investment in the groundbreaking ENDIA study,” said Dr. Gina Agiostratidou, Senior Program Officer in the Helmsley Charitable Trust’s Type 1 Diabetes Program. “This study will provide critical broad scale data that will drive our ability to investigate the early stages of type 1 diabetes and identify potential new pathways to prevent it.”

The partnership marks a successful outcome of the Australian Government’s strategy to put Australian research and researchers on an international platform, through it’s ARC investment of \$35 million over five years, which contributes towards the T1DCRN. The ARC funding was awarded last year as part of a [Special Research Initiative for Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes](#), led by JDRF Australia to expand a national collaborative network to coordinate team-based cross-disciplinary research projects.

The ENDIA study commenced with initial grant funding from Australia’s National Health and Medical Research Council and a further grant from JDRF.

ENDS

About JDRF and Type 1 Diabetes

Typically striking young people, type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that destroys the ability to produce insulin, which is vital for life. There are more than 120,000 Australians living with type 1 diabetes. Type 1 diabetes requires a daily regime of multiple injections or

continuous infusion of insulin through a pump, as well as 6 – 8 finger-prick blood tests, to stay alive.

Researchers are working hard to more fully understand the complicated mix of genetic and environmental factors that may cause or trigger this disease. However, it is certain that going on a diet or cutting down on sugar doesn't stop type 1 diabetes.

JDRF is the world's leading not-for-profit supporter of type 1 diabetes research globally, investing more than \$1.6 billion since 1970 including more than \$63 million into Australian research. JDRF's support has been behind most major advances in type 1 diabetes research in the past four decades.

The [Australian Type 1 Diabetes Clinical Research Network \(T1DCRN\)](#) is a collaboration of researchers and members of the type 1 diabetes community who are dedicated to increasing the excellence of clinical research that will positively impact the lives of people with type 1 diabetes in Australia.

As a Special Research Initiatives scheme funded by the Australian Research Council, the **T1DCRN** has received Australian Government funding of up to \$35 million for a period of up to five years to fund most promising research and researchers dedicated to finding a cure for type 1 juvenile diabetes and its complications.

JDRF Australia was recognised as the 2014 Charity of the Year in The Australian Charity Awards. The award recognises JDRF's campaign to secure \$35 million of funding (over five years).

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About the Helmsley Charitable Trust

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust aspires to improve lives by supporting exceptional nonprofits and other mission-aligned organizations in health, selected place-based initiatives, and education and human services. Since 2008, when the Trust began its active grantmaking, it has committed more than \$1 billion. The Helmsley Type 1 Diabetes Program is the largest private foundation funder of T1D in the nation focused on understanding the disease, developing better treatments and improving care and access. For more information, visit www.helmsleytrust.org.

The ENDIA study

The Environmental Determinant of Islet Autoimmunity, or ENDIA, study is investigating the causes of type 1 diabetes in early life so that we can find ways to prevent it.

Type 1 diabetes in children is twice as common as it was 20 years ago. This is because the environment that we live in has changed and this has made it more likely for a child at risk to develop type 1 diabetes. If we can understand what factors in the environment are harmful or protective, and how they interact with our genes, we can modify the environment to try and prevent type 1 diabetes.

Children may be exposed to the triggers of type 1 diabetes very early in life, perhaps even before they are born. The ENDIA study is aiming to recruit 1,400 pregnant women across Australia whose unborn baby has an immediate relative with type 1 diabetes. Newborn babies less than 6-months old are also eligible to join. Participation in the ENDIA study involves the collection of biological samples and questionnaires from pregnancy through to early childhood.

For more information about the ENDIA study please visit our website www.endia.org.au or follow us on Facebook www.facebook.com/endiastudy

The participating institutions

The ENDIA study is proud to involve the following Australian institutions:

South Australia: The University of Adelaide Robinson Research Institute, The Women's and Children's Hospital

Victoria: The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, The Royal Melbourne Hospital, The University of Melbourne, Deakin University

New South Wales: The University of NSW, The Children's Hospital at Westmead, The Royal Hospital for Women, The St George Hospital

Queensland: Mater Health Services - Brisbane, The University of Queensland

Western Australia: Princess Margaret Hospital, The Telethon Kids Institute, The Harry Perkins Institute of Medical Research