

September 2009

## DO YOU HAVE THE CHEEK TO HELP WITH CEREBRAL PALSY RESEARCH?

### MOTHERS AND CHILDREN NEEDED FOR WORLD-FIRST RESEARCH TO FIND CAUSES OF MOST COMMON PHYSICAL DISABILITY AFFECTING AUSTRALIAN KIDS

Mothers and children *without cerebral palsy* are being urged to volunteer to participate in a world-first research project to discover the causes of cerebral palsy (CP).

Cerebral palsy is the most common physical disability affecting Australian children. One in 400 babies is diagnosed with CP. There is no known cure, and for most the cause is unknown.

The Cerebral Palsy Institute is leading the world in searching for the causes and cure for CP. With funding from the Cerebral Palsy Foundation, the Institute has invested \$1.7 million into 20 significant research projects in Australia and overseas.

One of those research projects is being undertaken by international expert Professor Alastair MacLennan from the University of Adelaide. In a world-first, Professor MacLennan is investigating the health and genetic backgrounds of mothers to discover why some children, but not others, develop CP.

Dr Iona Novak from the Cerebral Palsy Institute says Professor MacLennan's research project began in 2007 and is now reaching a critical stage.

"Professor MacLennan and his team are looking at the health and genetic backgrounds of mothers of children born with cerebral palsy," Dr Novak said.

"Previous theories about difficult births being the cause of cerebral palsy have been shown to be inaccurate in most cases. This current research is investigating apparent links between faulty genes and factors in the child's environment such as infections in the womb."

Professor MacLennan was guest speaker at the Cerebral Palsy Foundation's inaugural Research Briefing held recently at the University of Notre Dame, Sydney.

He revealed his team has already successfully recruited mothers and children with cerebral palsy to assist in the research project. ***He now needs Caucasian mothers and children aged 5-18 years born in Australia, without cerebral palsy, to also participate.***

All that is involved is to complete a short survey and use a simple cheek swab posted to you and your child. Participation is easy, takes less than 10 minutes, and can be done from home.

Mothers and children interested can contact 1800 800 254 or SMS their name and address to 0439 201 795.

"In less than 10 minutes, the wider community can be part of this important research project which is moving us closer to finding the causes of cerebral palsy," Dr Novak said. "Most Australians know someone at work, school, or in their local community who has cerebral palsy. More children are affected by cerebral palsy than any other physical disability, yet in most cases its causes remain a mystery. We urge mothers and children who fit our research criteria to help us with this vital work," she said.

## **MEDIA CONTACTS**

Janine Jones – Marketing and Communications Manager - 9479 7245 / 0407 066 813

Jennifer Durante – Media Coordinator - 9479 7257 / 0419 802 602

### **The facts of cerebral palsy**

- Cerebral palsy (CP) is the most common, physical disability in childhood
- CP is a permanent disability that affects movement
- CP results from damage to the developing brain, usually before birth
- In Australia, 1 in 400 babies is diagnosed with CP
- There is no known cure and, for most, the cause is unknown
- People with CP may also have seizures, and sensory and intellectual impairments

Donations may be made by phoning 1300 136 140 or at [www.thespasticcentre.com.au](http://www.thespasticcentre.com.au)