



Under the Microscope

With Professor Assen Jablensky

A RPH mental health study, which is the first of its kind in Australia, has been granted more than \$440,000.

Awarded by the National Health and Medical Research Council, the population-based study links two of WA's medical databases – to identify origins of mental illness in babies.

The unique and modern nature of WA's medical databases means WA is the only state in Australia where this database linkage can occur.

The RPH study, conducted by Inner City Mental Health Consultant Professor Assen Jablensky, aims to reduce the risk of mental illness by identifying complications during pregnancy that are risk factors of the disease.

Identifying these risk factors – such as poor nutrition and viral infection– is achieved by linking two medical databases, the psychiatric disorder and maternal and child health research databases.

“We have found that while some of the risk of developing mental illness comes from genetics, up to 50% of the risk results from environmental factors,” Professor Jablensky said.

“Ultimately we aim to prevent mental disorders even before a baby is born.”

The study aims to enhance research into major mental disorders, and improve clinical and public health practice. It will be completed in 2007.