

Father driven to find cystic fibrosis cure

Inspired by my daughter Ella



DEVOTED DAD: Cystic fibrosis researcher Nigel Farrow, who is trying to find for a cure for his four-year-old daughter, Ella.

EDUCATION
EDITOR

LUCY
HOOD



WHEN Nigel Farrow's daughter, Ella, was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, he wasn't going to sit on the sidelines waiting for a cure.

Instead, the 39-year-old quit his career in the music industry and enrolled in a medical science degree.

The University of Adelaide honours student is now part of a team of researchers at the Women's and Children's Hospital and the Robinson Institute that is

leading the world in finding a cure for the genetic disease.

"Having a little one diagnosed with CF was very hard and, as it's genetic, we blamed ourselves," Mr Farrow said. "Having a clear understanding helped us deal with the day-to-day things and allowed us to enjoy life again."

Cystic fibrosis, which affects about 3000 children and young adults in Australia,

attacks the body's organs, particularly the lungs.

It is caused by a mutation in the gene that regulates sweat, digestive juices and mucus in the lungs.

Healthy people have two working copies of the gene, while in CF sufferers neither gene works normally.

The aim of Mr Farrow's research is to use a modified virus, or vector, to "carry" the therapeutic or "wanted" gene into the body to reach

airway stem cells.

The gene's characteristics would then be passed on to those stem cells, producing the correct daughter cells to improve lung function and provide a better quality of life for CF patients.

"This is an entirely new way to do medicine. We need to be completely sure that it works and is safe to eventually give to children

born with CF," Mr Farrow said.

Until then, life for Ella, 4, involves a daily regime of medication and physiotherapy. She takes up to 40 tablets a day to aid her digestion, undergoes intensive chest physiotherapy twice a day and cannot go to full-time childcare because catching a cold could result in a hospital trip.

"She has her ups and downs, good days and bad days (but) she's doing really well," Mr Farrow said. "She had to be a homebody but now she's just started kindly and is loving it."

To donate to the cause, visit www.cure4cf.org

A CONSTANT BATTLE

■ **Every**

four days a child is born with cystic fibrosis.



■ **The**

genetic disorder attacks organs, particularly the lungs, seriously affecting breathing and digestion.

■ **Every** day CF patients

may need to have up to two hours of intensive chest physiotherapy and up to 40 enzyme tablets.