

Positive news for shingles pain sufferers

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A new treatment from a University of Queensland start-up company, Spinifex Pharmaceuticals, could bring hope to shingles sufferers experiencing nerve pain.

A recent clinical trial of the company's lead product, EMA₄₀₁, showed promising results in treating the [pain](#), medically known as postherpetic [neuralgia](#) (PHN).

The results were presented at the 14th World Congress of Pain in Milan, a major international meeting organised by the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP).

David Henderson, Managing Director of UQ's main research commercialisation company, UniQuest, said the clinical trial results marked a major milestone for Spinifex Pharmaceuticals, which UniQuest formed in 2005.

"UQ's Professor Maree Smith and her colleagues have developed new possibilities to help doctors relieve patients of this extremely debilitating [nerve pain](#)," he said.

"As many as one in four people contract shingles in their lifetime and about 20 per cent of them will experience PHN, but there's no single [treatment](#) available that works for all of them without dose-limiting side-effects.

"Elderly people have twice the risk of contracting [shingles](#), so the global

[ageing population](#) trend has prompted predictions that the market for neuropathic pain treatments will exceed US\$6 billion in the next five years.

"With EMA401 being developed as a potential first-in-class oral treatment for neuropathic pain and related symptoms, Spinifex is on track to have a significant impact on this healthcare sector.

"And particularly rewarding for UniQuest is that the original discovery, upon which Spinifex Pharmaceuticals is based, was one of the winners of our very first Trailblazer innovative and entrepreneurial ideas competition at UQ, and we celebrating the winners of the 10th Trailblazer competition right now."

Spinifex Pharmaceuticals CEO Dr Tom McCarthy said it was tremendously gratifying for the Spinifex team to have taken a [scientific discovery](#) through to proof of clinical concept in what is a notoriously difficult field and one where new treatments are clearly needed.

"We look forward to advancing EMA₄₀₁ further in PHN, other neuropathic pain indications, and eventually as a broad treatment for chronic pain in general," he said.

Spinifex's clinical program for EMA₄₀₁ is currently recruiting for a Phase 2 study in the treatment of neuropathic pain in cancer chemotherapy patients. More information about Spinifex Pharmaceuticals' drug development programs can be found on this website, www.spinifexpharma.com.au.

Provided by University of Queensland

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