

Revolutionary treatment for psoriasis

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Three per cent of the world's population suffer from the skin condition known as psoriasis. A Norwegian research-based company is close to developing a treatment that could help millions. The research may also prove beneficial in the treatment of other illnesses.

The psoriasis treatment consists of a compound which, when applied to the skin, is absorbed by [skin cells](#) much more naturally than most other ointments. It contains a synthesised molecule based on the fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid ([DHA](#)) which may prove effective in inhibiting [chronic inflammation](#) associated with psoriasis.

Clinical trials soon underway

Avexxin, a Trondheim-based company, is to begin clinical testing of the ointment in early 2013. If the results are positive, Avexxin may find itself on the cusp of an international breakthrough.

Successful tests of the psoriasis compound could also give an important boost to the pursuit of more comprehensive clinical trials to determine whether the technology can be applied to other [chronic inflammatory conditions](#) such as rheumatoid arthritis and nephritis, an inflammation in the kidneys.

Combining clinical phases 1 and 2A

Clinical trials often extend over a long period of time. The treatment must first be tested for toxicity on healthy volunteers. Subsequent trials

must be carried out on real patients to ensure that the treatment has the desired effect. With an ointment such as this, which is to be applied externally, it is possible to combine trial phases 1 and 2A.

"This enables us to save a lot of time," explains Professor Berit Johansen of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). Dr Johansen has been studying the mechanisms behind inflammatory disease since the end of the 1980s. She launched the company, Avexxin, in 2005.

Potential for treating other conditions

Two Avexxin projects have received funding under the programme for User-driven Research-based Innovation (BIA) at the Research Council of Norway:

- Development of mechanism based, novel anti-inflammatory compounds (2006-2009)
- Expanding drug pipeline in Avexxin - adopting new chemistry (2009-2012)

"We have been lucky in obtaining private funding that supports our main focus – the development of a medicine for treating psoriasis," Dr Johansen explains.

"The financial support we have received from the Research Council has been critical to our research and has enabled us to develop several molecules to treat other inflammatory conditions with the same [treatment](#) target as psoriasis. These molecules could prove effective in treating [rheumatoid arthritis](#) and nephritis," Dr Johansen states.

"When we carried out tests in summer 2012 to see whether one of the

new molecules might have any effect on arthritis in animals, the results were extremely encouraging."

Substantial international attention

"Our most recent results are especially important now that we have begun negotiating with international pharmaceutical companies towards potential agreements," Berit Johansen says. Three leading pharmaceutical companies are currently courting the Norwegian team.

If the decisive clinical trial proves a success Dr Johansen and her colleagues will enter into discussions on licensing their patent to one of these companies. This will be the company that undertakes the final clinical trials.

Avexxin was recently nominated as one of the world's Top 10 Autoimmune/Anti-Inflammatory companies to watch.

Provided by The Research Council of Norway

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