

New rheumatoid arthritis treatment moves a step closer to reality

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A new rheumatoid arthritis treatment has moved a step closer to reality with the announcement of collaboration between a University of Queensland start-up company and a major pharmaceutical firm.

The collaboration with Johnson & Johnson pharmaceutical company Janssen Biotech Inc will see the new vaccine move closer to a phase 1 clinical trial.

UQ Diamantina Institute lead autoimmunity researcher Professor Ranjeny Thomas said the development and potential commercialisation of the immunotherapy [treatment](#) could eventually benefit the world's millions of rheumatoid [arthritis](#) sufferers.

Rheumatoid arthritis is a painful condition caused by immune system dysfunction. It destroys joints and causes cardiovascular complications that can reduce life spans by 10 years.

The technology is being commercialised by Dendright Pty Ltd, a start-up company of UniQuest. UniQuest is UQ's main commercialisation company.

The technology behind the treatment differs from existing drugs in that it results in a targeted therapy and allows suitable patients to be selected based on specific biomarkers, thereby improving response rates.

It targets the underlying cause of rheumatoid arthritis rather than simply

treating the inflammatory symptoms.

It is hoped the treatment will prove effective for rheumatoid arthritis patients and that it could lead to innovation of treatments for other diseases, such as type 1 diabetes.

Dendright received seed funding from Janssen in 2012 to undertake early preclinical development studies, and the new collaboration will build on the outcomes of that work.

"We are very pleased to be continuing and strengthening our strategic collaboration with Janssen, focussing on the application of our platform technology towards rheumatoid arthritis", Professor Thomas said.

"Our goal is to provide [rheumatoid arthritis](#) patients with a new, safe therapy for the management of their disease, with the possibility of disease prevention in the future."

UQ Acting President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Deborah Terry congratulated Professor Thomas, her UQ Diamantina Institute team for progressing an industry collaboration with the goal of making inroads into a painful and widespread disease.

"This is a great example of UQ researchers collaborating with industry and our commercialisation experts, with their sights fixed on transforming excellent science into life-enhancing products," Professor Terry said.

Provided by University of Queensland

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