

Trial tests extract from a rare tropical fruit for schizophrenia treatment

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Credit: University of Queensland

Researchers at The University of Queensland have begun clinical trials into whether an extract from a rare tropical fruit can help treat schizophrenia.

Queensland Brain Institute Professor John McGrath is conducting the trial into the role of mangosteens in easing symptoms of psychosis.

Previous research has indicated that the very potent antioxidants in mangosteen rind might provide a safe and effective treatment, with no

side-effects.

"This is a gentle and safe intervention which evidence so far suggests could improve symptoms, and it's important we investigate its potential as a matter of urgency," Professor McGrath said.

"We aren't suggesting this is a wonder drug, but we must investigate potential new treatments which are safe, effective and don't have the current medication's side-effects like weight gain, which can lead to other major health problems.

"Finding better treatments for schizophrenia is difficult, it will take decades, so let's start now."

Mangosteen is a tropical evergreen fruit native to Indonesia. The thick purple rind of the fruit contains compounds called xanthones which are often used in herbal teas and traditional medicines.

For this trial run through Cadence, 150 people with schizophrenia will be recruited over the next two years in Brisbane and in Geelong, Victoria with colleagues at Deakin University.

Participants will receive two tablets a day for 24 weeks, then have four weeks' follow-up. Their symptoms will be closely monitored, to see whether hallucinations, delusions, moods and energy levels are improved.

Antioxidants are thought to work because they restrict potentially damaging molecules known as 'free radicals' which can build up in certain disease states.

"I've found over the years that when you talk to patients or their relatives they say 'I just don't want anyone else to go through this'," Professor

McGrath said.

"When people join a clinical trial like this, they become our citizen scientists, part of our research team.

"That is an inspiring and heart-warming trust which we hope will ultimately lead to better lives for all patients, even if it's only a modest improvement."

Provided by University of Queensland

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