

# **Trials bring hope for world–first rheumatoid arthritis treatment**

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UQ's Diamantina Institute Professor Ranjeny Thomas. Credit: University of Queensland

Human trials of an innovative treatment for rheumatoid arthritis developed by The University of Queensland have begun in Brisbane.

DEN-181, a vaccine-style treatment referred to as an 'immunotherapy', targets the underlying cause of the disease rather than treating its inflammatory symptoms.

Patient [trials](#) at a clinical research facility at the Princess Alexandra

Hospital began last week.

UQ's Diamantina Institute research team, led by Professor Ranjeny Thomas, discovered the body's immune system could be 're-educated' to turn off, rather than react to a self-antigen responsible for autoimmune disease like [rheumatoid arthritis](#). This led to the development of DEN-181.

DEN-181 is being commercialised by Dendright Pty Ltd, a start-up company of UniQuest, UQ's commercialisation company.

UniQuest CEO Dr Dean Moss said the first-in-human trial was a momentous step towards making the breakthrough research discovery a treatment reality.

"This is an important milestone in developing a new medicine for the millions of people affected by this debilitating disease which destroys joints, causes cardiovascular complications and can reduce life-span," he said.

Professor Thomas, who is also Dendright's Chief Scientific Officer, said the phase 1b clinical trial was the bridge to bringing scientific data into clinical practice.

"The study team will be monitoring and assessing DEN-181 safety and immunological response in patients and we thank the participating patients and referring rheumatologists," she said.

UQ Advancement Director of Development and Philanthropy Andrew Pentland said Arthritis Queensland had been an important supporter of UQ's translational research and approaches to understanding disease biology since the early 1990s.

"Arthritis Queensland has provided philanthropic funding for the Arthritis Queensland Chair of Rheumatology at UQ over many years," he said.

"This is a great example of how a philanthropic partnership can help drive important research outcomes for the benefit of community."

Professor Thomas is the inaugural recipient of the Arthritis Queensland Chair of Rheumatology at UQ.

Dendright entered into a research collaboration and option to license agreement with US-based Janssen Biotech, Inc. (Janssen) in 2013.

This year Janssen agreed to provide additional funding to support further research, including the first-in-human safety trial and tolerability study that began in Brisbane last week.

Provided by University of Queensland

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