

UQ collaborates to advance spider venom pain research

17 February 2012

Australian scientists are working with industry to develop a spider venom extract for treating chronic pain.

UniQuest, The University of Queensland's (UQ) main research commercialisation company, announced today that researchers at the Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) have entered into an agreement for a focused funding grant and collaborative research project with Johnson & Johnson's Corporate Office of Science and Technology (COSAT), and certain of its Janssen affiliates, to develop components of spider venom that may be effective as a treatment for pain.

The grant funding will support a 12-month project to characterise novel spider venom peptides that were discovered in a proprietary IMB assay to inhibit a human ion channel, critical for sensing pain.

The long-term goal is to develop these peptides for the therapeutic treatment of chronic pain. The project team includes Professors Glenn King, Richard Lewis, Paul Alewood and their research teams. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Chronic pain occurs when the nervous system continues issuing pain signals despite the lack of a pain stimulus. It is experienced at some point in the lives of 1 in 5 Australians. In the US an estimated \$560 billion annually is lost due to healthcare costs and reduced productivity.

UniQuest Managing Director, David Henderson, said the new agreement between IMB and COSAT would accelerate the process of seeking a solution to chronic pain, a world-wide health problem estimated to affect 1.5 billion people.

" Discoveries like this pass through many developmental stages before they become market-ready therapeutic products, so combining the resources and expertise of Australian researchers and COSAT means potential pain drug candidates for clinical trials are likely to be identified much sooner," Mr Henderson said.

" Support from a partner with international networks highlights the contribution Australian university researchers are making to science and society on a global scale."

Professor King said the grant and collaborative research project with COSAT and its Janssen affiliates is vital.

" We are delighted to be collaborating with COSAT on this important project in the area of discovering and developing new treatments for chronic pain," Professor King said.

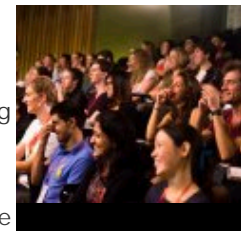
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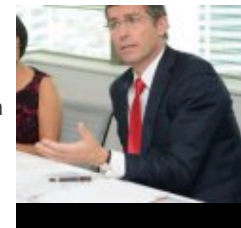
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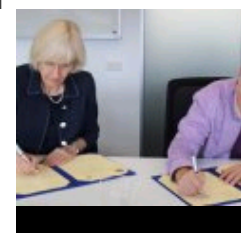
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About the Institute for Molecular Bioscience

The University of Queensland's [Institute for Molecular Bioscience \(IMB\)](#) is recognised nationally and internationally as one of Australia's leading research institutes. It was established in 2000 and houses around 400 research staff and research students with an annual budget in the order of around A\$70 million. IMB researchers work on a wide range of human diseases, from early childhood developmental disorders to infectious diseases, diabetes and kidney disease. Its labs are engaged in basic or discovery-level research aimed at understanding the normal function of genes, molecules and cells in our bodies and identifying what goes wrong in disease. IMB scientists also carry out directed research aimed at finding, testing and developing new drugs to treat human diseases. The Institute has major research programs in pain, cancer and infection.

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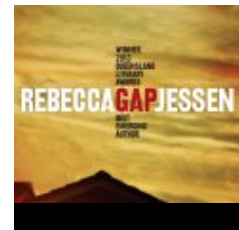
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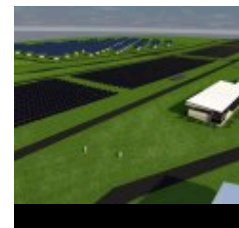
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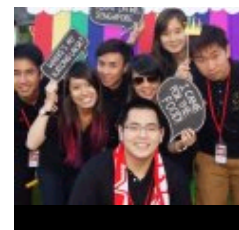
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