

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Clinical trial to improve memory in Down syndrome to start in Tasmania

An ingredient used for decades in cough syrup, and to treat a variety of conditions, could hold the key to improving memory, language, and learning in people with Down syndrome.

In an Australia-wide multi-centre clinical trial, the first of its kind targeting cognitive impairment in people with Down syndrome, researchers at the University of Tasmania are currently investigating the effectiveness of the ingredient, known as BTD-001, and its potential to significantly improve the quality of life of people with Down syndrome - the most common genetic form of intellectual disability affecting six million people worldwide.

Tasmanian Principal Investigator, Dr Mathew Summers from UTAS' Faculty of Health Science, said early scientific evidence into the drug's ability to improve the cognitive function of people with Down syndrome was promising.

"It is hoped that this trial and the continued development of the drug could lead to a product that can improve the cognitive abilities, and ultimately the quality of life of people with Down syndrome," Dr Summers said.

"The development of such a medication could assist in improving some of the difficulties those living with Down syndrome may have, such as the ability to learn at school, to become self-reliant, to get a job or to manage their own finances.

"To date management has tended to focus on treating the physical complications of Down syndrome, but we now have a better understanding of the science underlying how Down syndrome impacts brain function to cause cognitive disability."

The clinical study is based on recent research at Stanford University, which first uncovered the strong potential of BTD-001, to improve reasoning, memory and learning capabilities.

Dr Summers and his team are currently trialing a new lower dose formulation of the drug, which was discovered in the 1920s, and used to treat a wide variety of conditions including cough, vertigo, and dementia until the 1980s. The drug is still used in cough syrup for children in parts of the world. The team is working with people with Down syndrome ages 13 to 35. The

Tasmanian trial taking part in Launceston is part of a multi-centre trial recruiting participants from Adelaide, Melbourne and Perth. Other sites in New South Wales and Queensland are planned.

Development of this product is supported by the USA Government through the National Institute of Health and US-based company Balance Therapeutics and its subsidiary based in Melbourne.

Those wanting to participate should call 1300 659 729 FREE or check the study sites listed on compose21.com which also contains more details of the study.

For more information or to request interviews please contact Lana Best, University of Tasmania Media and Communications on +61 3 6324 5019 or lane.best@utas.edu.au

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