

# Century-old drug has promise

A NEW treatment for Ross River fever could make a world of difference for people with the disease.

If successful, pentosan polysulfate sodium could be used to significantly reduce the duration and severity of joint pain caused by the virus that has infected 114 Northern NSW residents this year.

The drug has been around for more than a century to prevent formation of platelets during pre-operative procedures and to treat bladder pain.

It has also been used for osteoarthritis in animals and humans.

Paradigm Biopharma launched the limited clinical trial this month and is seeking people with the Ross River virus to take part.

It will be at least 12 months before researchers know if the drug is a success, with results to be released in mid-2018.

If successful, the drug could also be used to treat



**INFECTION WORRY: The *Aedes aegypti* mosquito.**

**PHOTO:**

another mosquito-borne disease, chikungunya, that is prominent in South-East Asia.

Mater Health Services infectious disease specialist Paul Griffin will oversee the clinical trial.

Dr Griffin said the trial was set to treat Queensland and Victorian patients but if there was enough interest the number of patients would be increased and trial sites could be set up in other areas.

He said participants would be injected with the drug twice a week for six weeks and they would be monitored for about 102 days.

“We are very confident of the safety of this medication,” he said.

Paradigm Biopharm chief executive officer Paul Rennie said the drug could prove to be the best treatment for “the worst flu you’ve ever had”.

— **Sherele Moody**