

# Ross River virus drug trials begin

Australian researchers are working on a treatment for Ross River virus — the debilitating mosquito-borne infection that has surged in WA this year.

A Queensland-based company is testing an experimental drug that holds hope of being the first effective treatment for the disease, which causes pain in the joints and extreme tiredness.

Early results suggest the drug can stop the disease from progressing and significantly reduce complications caused by cartilage in joints breaking down.

There have been 870 cases of Ross River virus so far this year in WA compared with 231 at the same time last year and 720 in 2015. Almost half of the cases this year have been in the metropolitan area. Paradigm Biopharmaceuticals has launched the first clinical trial of pentosan polysulfate sodium, a drug that has been used for other medical purposes since the 1940s.

**Cathy O'Leary**