

# New drug set to cut hip, knee surgery

**SUE DUNLEVY**

MORE than three million Australians, including top sports stars crippled by pain, are set to benefit from a new blockbuster medication discovered by Aussie scientists.

The osteoarthritis drug could delay or eliminate the need for hip and knee replacements, saving the world's health systems tens of billions of dollars.

There is currently no effective medication for osteoarthritis, which occurs when cartilage in joints thins and bones rub together, creating stiffness and pain.

The degenerative disease is the most common cause of chronic pain in Australia and the leading cause of joint replacements, which cost the health system more than \$1.2 billion a year.

Australian scientist Professor Peter Ghosh and Australian company Paradigm Biopharma found that the drug pentosan polysulfate sodium could reduce and eliminate osteoarthritis pain.

A peer-reviewed case study of an arthritis patient showed her pain went from eight out of 10 to zero after six injections of PPS over three weeks, and she no longer needs a knee replacement.

Of another 30 patients treated with the drug, 70 per cent experienced a significant reduction in their arthritis pain, while another 15 per cent got initial relief, but the trial did not allow a seventh dose.

If a Phase 2 clinical trial, due to start within months, confirms early results, PPS has the potential to delay or eliminate the need for 75,000 hip and knee replacements a year.

Monash University arthritis expert Professor Flavia Cicuttini said the results were fantastic but needed further testing.

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