

# Arthritis drug miracle?

## Aussie scientists discover breakthrough medication

**SUE DUNLEVY**  
**EXCLUSIVE**

IT'S being billed as the first blockbuster drug since anti-cholesterol pills.

And more than three million Australians, including the nation's top sports stars who are crippled by pain, are set to benefit from the new medication.

Discovered by Australian scientists, the medication for osteoarthritis has the potential

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

There is no effective medication for osteoarthritis, which is caused by the thinning of cartilage in joints which results in bones rubbing together, creating stiffness, pain, and difficulty moving.

It is the leading cause of joint replacements which cost

Australia's health system more than \$1.2 billion a year.

Australian scientist Professor Peter Ghosh and an Australian company, Paradigm Biopharma, has discovered the drug Pentosan Polysulfate Sodium, used for 70 years to treat blood clots and urinary tract infections in women can reduce and eliminate osteoarthritis pain.

As yet there has been no double blind placebo controlled trial of the medicine.

However, a peer reviewed case study of Australian arthritis patient Kaye O'Loughlin to be published in the Journal BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders within weeks shows her arthritis pain went from 8/10 to 0/10 after six injections of the treatment over three weeks and she no longer needs

a knee replacement.

Another 30 patients have been treated with the drug and 70 per cent have seen significant reduction in arthritis pain, another 15 per cent got initial relief but the trial did not allow them a seventh dose.

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

There is no effective medication for osteoarthritis – the second leading cause of disability and the most common cause of chronic pain in Australia. Sufferers rely on anti-inflammatories and other pain relief which have side effects but no medicine can yet halt the progression of the disease.