

Aussie wonder drug to cure crippling arthritis

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EXCLUSIVE

SUE DUNLEVY

MILLIONS of Australians suffering crippling joint pain stand to benefit from a breakthrough treatment discovered by Australian scientists for the most common form of arthritis.

South Australian woman Kaye O'Loughlin says her knee pain from osteoarthritis has gone from eight out of 10 to zero after just six

injections of the drug over three weeks in a trial.

More clinical trials of the drug, which could delay or eliminate the need for hip and knee replacements, will begin soon.

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ARTHRITIS DRUG BREAKTHROUGH

Relief from agony, ops for millions



HORSE SENSE: Kaye O'Loughlin, 71, at Murray Bridge with Cadasha, is back working with racehorses after breakthrough treatment. Picture: TOM HUNTLEY

EXCLUSIVE SUE DUNLEVY

MORE than three million Australians suffering crippling joint pain are set to benefit from a breakthrough osteoarthritis medication.

Australian scientists have uncovered a drug to tackle the most common cause of chronic pain in the country in what has been billed the first blockbuster medicine since anti-cholesterol pills.

The new drug has the potential to delay or eliminate

the need for hip and knee replacements, which cost Australia's health system more than \$1.2 billion a year.

There is currently 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.

A discovery by scientists at Melbourne biotech company,

Paradigm Biopharma, could revolutionise treatment methods.

They have found Pentosan Polysulfate Sodium, used for 70 years to treat blood clots and urinary tract infections in women, can reduce and eliminate osteoarthritis pain.

A peer-reviewed case study of arthritis patient Kaye O'Loughlin of Murray Bridge, to be published in the *Journal BMC Musculoskeletal Disor-*

ders, shows her arthritis pain went from 8/10 to 0/10 after six injections of the treatment over three weeks.

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 their arthritis pain.

A Phase 2 clinical trial is due to start within months.

Professor Peter Ghosh and

Dr Jegan Krishnan discovered the new treatment but say at this stage they are not sure why it works.

“It may have anti-inflammatory activities. It seems addressing bone marrow lesions gives symptomatic relief,” Dr Krishnan said.

Paradigm Biopharma has patented the treatment for osteoarthritis and secured 20 years’ supply of the drug from the German company that manufactures it for use in blood clots.

Ms O’Loughlin has worked with racehorses all her life and

knew the drug Pentosan Polysulfate Sodium got them back on their feet when they were injured.

Now it’s changed her life.

The breakthrough treatment has cured the osteoarthritis pain in the 71-year-old’s knee and she no longer needs a knee replacement.

In February, 2016 Ms O’Loughlin injured her knee while helping out a friend with some racehorses.

Her meniscus was torn, the knee swelled and she had an arthroscopy but the injury did not resolve and she was on a waiting list for knee surgery.

Before the injury she used to love gardening and would walk for four hours every morning helping hose down and feed racehorses, but this all changed due to knee pain.

In August last year an MRI showed she had bone marrow lesions and she was offered a chance to trial the new treatment, with two injections each week for three weeks.

“After the third injection I thought ‘this feels good’ when I got out of bed,” she said.

“The discomfort went completely and I could walk for hours again, I didn’t feel anything.”

Now she’s back working with racehorses.

“I’m on my feet four hours a

day, I start at 6am,” she said.

Dr Krishnan, who treats Ms O’Loughlin, says he has been trialling the medication on 30 other patients who have arthritis. “I don’t know if this is a cure but it possibly may change the arthritis, the joint destruction,” he said.