

VIC NEWS

Anti-cancer drug to undergo trials for coronavirus patients

Alanah Frost, Herald Sun

June 25, 2020 9:30pm

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Melbourne researchers are behind a new international trial using an anti-cancer drug in the hope it could save the lives of seriously ill COVID-19 patients.

Researchers from the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Clayton have been probing whether the prostate cancer drug Veyonda could help reduce inflammation and protect against organ failure in [coronavirus cases](#).



Researchers are probing whether the prostate cancer drug Veyonda could help reduce inflammation and protect against organ failure in coronavirus cases. Picture: AFP

Their findings were picked up by Australian company Noxopharm, which last week announced it would begin trialling the drug in Europe.

Inflammation is one of the key causes of COVID-19 patients becoming so sick. When infected, the lungs are attacked and become inflamed.

The body reacts to this infection by sending proteins called cytokines to fight it off — but it can also cause the body to go into overdrive, resulting in extreme inflammation, which can lead to sepsis and fatally harm vital organs.

Research group head Michael Gantier said by stopping this reaction, the severity of the infection and any potential long-term impacts, could be reduced.



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“Basically, if you are given this drug at the right time you can block the toxic inflammation and you will limit the tissue damage,” Dr Gantier said.

“The argument we are running is it is possible it (the drug) will limit amplification of that toxic damage you get when you have the infection.

“Ultimately, that’s better for the patient to recover — and it has better long-term impacts.”

The drug works by blocking what is known as the STING pathway, which has been linked to tissue damage and

inflammation.

It's hoped the drug can prevent that damage in COVID patients and restore balance so the body can recover.

Noxopharm is teaming up with hospitals in Europe to begin trialling Veyonda on COVID patients.

The company has looked to the overseas market due to the high volume of cases, as opposed to testing it in Australia.

Dr Gantier said while there was not direct evidence in COVID-19 patients as yet, the signs were promising.

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Originally published as [How anti-cancer drug may save lives in coronavirus fight](#)