

First steps towards a new approach to epilepsy treatment

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The most prestigious funding body in the world for epilepsy has financially backed Australian research into new approaches to treat the condition.

The Epilepsy Therapy Project will provide almost US\$300,000 over the next two years to a group of researchers from leading Australian institutions including the University of Newcastle.

The group will further develop new ways to treat the one-third of epilepsy patients for whom current treatments do not control their seizures.

Associate Professor Adam McCluskey from the University's School of Environmental and Life Sciences said the new funding would build on recent discoveries involving brain cell communication in sufferers of epilepsy.

"We have already found that compounds designed to block the action of a protein called dynamin are effective against laboratory models of epilepsy – in these models they appear to block progression of key elements associated with epileptic seizures," Associate Professor McCluskey said.

"Four classes of drugs have been tested and two of these show real potential in stopping epileptic seizures, which is promising news for the one-third of people who don't respond to current treatments."

Approximately one in 120 people have epilepsy, while up to five per cent of the world's population will have a seizure at some time in their lives.

"The funding will allow us to continue clinical development of the new drugs and move towards commercialisation. If all goes to plan a new treatment for epilepsy could be entering clinical trials within the next three to five years," Associate Professor McCluskey said.

Source: Research Australia

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