

Josiah makes the grade

Bethany Hiatt

Born without arms, Josiah Kappert is used to overcoming challenges but being awarded a scholarship will make it easier for him to get an education. The first-year university student is one of a select group of young people to receive a bursary of up to \$12,500 from youth charity the Young Australian League.

Mr Kappert, 18, who finished Year 12 at Rehoboth Christian College last year and is studying political science and international relations at the University of WA, also has scoliosis.

He uses his feet to carry out tasks for which most people use their hands - from typing assignments to drinking a cup of coffee. Getting to and from university without help from his parents has proved hard, but the scholarship will allow him to travel independently.

Mr Kappert, who will receive his bursary from YAL patron Chief Justice Wayne Martin today, said he was inspired to study political science because of his interest in people. "I see it as a way to learn and accept other cultures, languages and ways of life," he said.



Josiah Kappert has been awarded a scholarship by the Young Australian League. Picture: Ross Swanborough

Photo available at westpix.com.au

Human drug trial key to beat Alzheimer's

Sue Dunlevy

A drug to beat Australia's second-biggest killer, Alzheimer's disease, will start clinical trials on patients within months.

The medicine Xanamem blocks the stress hormone cortisol to improve mental function and is being billed as the world's next blockbuster drug after it improved the mental function of mice.

Australian company Actinogen Medical will begin trials of its Alzheimer's disease drug Xanamem on the Central Coast of NSW as well as in Sydney and Melbourne.

More than 170 patients

with mild dementia in Australia, Britain and the US will take part in the placebo-controlled 12-week trial.

University of Newcastle's Jonathan Sturm, whose patients were to take part in the trial, said there was a great need for an effective Alzheimer's treatment but while the new pill was promising "it's still an early stage study".

"It's very important to get new treatments," Professor Sturmhe said.

"The current treatments boost neurotransmitters, so they treat the symptoms but they don't treat the underlying disease."

A CSIRO study of 1000 elderly Australians that

began in 2006 found a link between elevated cortisol in the blood and the subsequent development of Alzheimer's disease.

In 2015, an Edinburgh University study in mice showed that lowering cortisol in the brain improved their memory and decreased the number of amyloid plaques in the brain that are associated with Alzheimer's disease.

A study last year at the same university showed Xanamem was safe in humans, decreased the production of cortisol in healthy humans and successfully crossed the blood-brain barrier.

The next phase of testing

will determine whether it improves the mental function of people with mild dementia.

Actinogen Medical managing Director Dr Bill Ketelby said the medication might also be useful in treating post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and other mental problems.

Researchers also want to study whether it might help patients recover from heart attacks. More than 413,000 Australians live with dementia and nearly a million will have the disease by 2050. The disease, which damages the brain resulting in impaired memory, thinking and behaviour, killed 12,625 Australians in 2015.

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