

Bronwyn tells cheats 'give me my gold'



INJUSTICE: Former Australian Olympic long jumper Bronwyn Thompson with her children Isabelle, 5, Zali, 4, Llana, 2, and Jacob, 7 and Inset. Thompson in action at the 2004 Athens Olympics. Main picture: TARA CROSER

SELINA STEELE

AN AUSTRALIAN athlete who finished behind three Russian drug cheats at the Athens Olympics has launched a bid to be awarded a gold medal 13 years later. Bronwyn Thompson, along with Great Britain's Jade Johnson and India's Anju Bobby George, are calling on their national federations and the IAAF to launch an immediate investigation into the long jump medals from the 2004 Athens Olympics. The 39-year-old Queens-

land physiotherapist finished fourth in Athens behind three Russian athletes who all tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs. Thompson's former coach Gary Bourne, a long-term member of the Australian Olympic Team, hopes to kick-start the investigation at an Athletics Australia meeting this week. Despite the samples from the Athens Games being destroyed, Bourne is hoping the Russian athletes can be outed in the same way as Marion Jones and Lance Armstrong.

"We strongly believe that a massive injustice occurred in 2004 with failure of the IOC testing laboratory in Greece to identify positive test results for these Russian medallists," he said. Thompson said: "As a realist, I understand we may not change the outcome, but we have to try. You can't ever give someone back the moment on top of the podium once you've stolen it from them. I have a great life after athletics... but would I love to be awarded the gold after finishing behind... drug cheats? Of course."



Dementia drug trial will give new hope

SUE DUNLEVY

A NEW drug to beat the nation's second biggest killer, Alzheimer's disease, will be trialled on Australian patients within months.

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 the drug on the Central Coast of NSW, as well as Sydney and Melbourne.

More than 170 patients with mild dementia in Australia, the UK and the US will take part in the placebo-controlled 12-week trial.

University of Newcastle's Professor Jonathan Sturm, whose patients will take part in the trial, said that while the new pill was promising, "it's still an early stage study".

"It's very important to get new treatments - the current treatments boost neurotransmitters so they treat the symptoms but they don't treat the underlying disease," he said.

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.

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

A 2016 study at the same university showed Xanamem was safe in humans, reduced 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 says the medication may 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. Over 413,000 Australians have 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 and is forecast to overtake heart disease as our biggest killer by 2021.

Alzheimer's Australia chief executive Maree McCabe welcomed the trial and said it would provide new hope for patients and their families.

"Finding a way to diagnose Alzheimer's disease early is just as important as finding a cure," she said.

Researchers at the University of California recently devised a genetic "score" they claim can predict a person's likelihood of developing Alzheimer's and several research teams are working on blood tests to diagnose the disease decades earlier.

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