

# Alzheimer's wonder drug shows promise



Jim Northey, who took part in a trial of a new Alzheimer's wonder drug called Xanamen, at home in Caloundra with wife Bev. Picture: Lachie Millard

## Greg Stolz

Six Queenslanders are taking part in an international clinical trial for what's being billed as a potential "holy grail" treatment for Alzheimer's disease, with more being sought to take part.

The trial of the drug, Emedastat, is being conducted by Sydney-based biotech company Actinogen Medical, which has spent the last decade developing the pill originally discovered by researchers at the University of Edinburgh.

The drug, which goes by the brand name Xanamen, is designed to target the brain's release of stress hormone cortisol, recognised as a key driver of neurodegeneration.

The World Health Organisation this year gave Xanamen a "first-in-class" status in what Actinogen says is "a rare glo-

bal endorsement that places Actinogen among the most promising players in neuroscience worldwide".

"This could just be the holy grail for Alzheimer's disease, or at least part of the holy grail as a combination therapy," Actinogen CEO Dr Steve Gourlay told The Courier-Mail. "We're the only ones in the world developing a drug like this that can get into the brain and do what we hope will significantly slow Alzheimer's disease."

Dr Gourlay said the molecule for Xanamen was developed by a "very smart chemist" at the University of Edinburgh to penetrate the brain and reduce cortisol levels.

"The idea is that you need your stress response in times of when you need to be defensive or run away from a threat, but putting your brain in a chronic state of stress is bad for you," he said.

## This could just be the holy grail for Alzheimer's disease

Dr Steve Gourlay  
Actinogen CEO

"For example, if you take cortisol as a pill, say for asthma or arthritis – if you take that for a few weeks, you get depressed, you get muscle wasting, you get diabetes. All sorts of terrible things happen."

"And so the whole idea is that chronically elevated levels of cortisol in the brain essentially are bad for you, toxic to nerve cells and cause inflammation."

Dr Gourlay said Xanamen

was designed to be a once-a-day pill to treat one of the underlying causes of Alzheimer's, unlike new treatments targeting amyloid plaques and requiring costly monthly infusions.

"We're actually trying to treat the underlying biology of the disease," he said.

He said about 400 people had been treated with the medication so far with "promising" results in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's, as well as treating chronic depression.

About 220 Alzheimer's sufferers in Australia and the US are taking part in a clinical trial that Actinogen hopes could see the drug receive approval from Australia's Therapeutic Goods Administration and America's Food and Drug Administration.

Queensland trials are being run by the University of Sunshine Coast and Prince Charles Hospital, with partici-

pants including 81-year-old Caloundra man Jim Northey.

Mr Northey's wife, Bev, said she had noticed significant improvement in her husband during the treatment, to the extent she believed he must have been given Xanamen rather than the placebo which some trialists receive.

"Initially, I didn't know if it was going to work but as we got going along, we could see some definite improvements in Jim," she said.

"He was much more engaging, he was confident in himself, his memory in the tests they gave him ... I could see some real improvements in him. I felt very confident he was either not getting any worse or certainly getting better."

Dr Gourlay said it could be the end of the decade before Xanamen was publicly available.

## 'I knew he was a man': JK

Sophie Elsworth

Author J.K. Rowling has applauded leaked results showing Olympic gold medallist Imane Khelif is a biological male and said females "won't be battered to death in the ring by men".

Recent reports showed leaked medical results belonging to Khelif from the 2023 World Championships proving the Algerian is male and the international sports federation World Boxing declared Khelif must undergo mandatory sex screening before competing in future.



UK writer  
JK Rowling

Rowling – who has 14.3 million followers on X and has been outspoken about protecting women's rights – posted: "It's a win for women because they won't be battered to death in the ring by men."

"If you had any idea what physical tests women go through routinely in their lives you'd know a cheek swab is no bigger deal than flossing your teeth."

"Any more moronic questions, wing them over."

She also posted: "I never said and never believed Khelif was trans. I knew he was a man."

The report claiming to have Khelif's medical history was reported on website 3 Wire Sports by journalist Alan Abrahamson last week.

Amid much controversy Khelif won Olympic gold in the 66kg category in 2024.

## Gas found in exoplanet

Astronomers have uncovered the chemical composition of an exoplanet 850 light years away with unprecedented precision.

The University of Newcastle-led study found that silicon monoxide gas was present in the atmosphere of exoplanet WASP-121b or "Tylos". This is the first and only time the gas has been detected in the atmosphere of any planet – including those in our solar system and the exoplanets beyond the solar system.

Tylos was discovered in 2015 and is one of the thousands of exoplanets.

## Anger over surf club demolition swells

Crystal Fox

A southern Gold Coast councillor says the City consulted with the Rainbow Bay Surf Life Saving Club ahead of releasing controversial plans to demolish its 63-year-old clubhouse.

The Snapper Rocks to Rainbow Bay Foreshore Precinct masterplan was released on Saturday, outlining five major changes over the next 20 years. The plan included the demo-

lition and redevelopment of the surf club and pedestrianising Snapper Rocks Rd.

The proposals sparked a heated debate among residents, with some saying the building should be heritage listed and others saying it should be demolished.

On Monday afternoon, division 14 councillor Gail O'Neill responded to concerns over whether or not the surf club had been consulted before the

plans were released.

"The draft masterplan has been created through input from the following focus groups: 1. Residents; 2. Sport and tourism (which included Rainbow Surf Club and Snapper Boardriders Club)," she said.

"Rainbow Bay Surf Club operate under a council lease and there is no intention for this to change."

"Council is totally support-

ive of all the lifesaving clubs on the Gold Coast.

"The club has, for the last couple of years, kept council informed of their intentions to upgrade and expand the club."

Ms O'Neill noted the toilet block behind the surf club was "nearing the end of its life".

"Council has expressed an interest in funding public amenities to be included in any refurbished or redeveloped surf-club building."



Rainbow Bay Surf Club will be demolished. Picture: Glenn Hampson