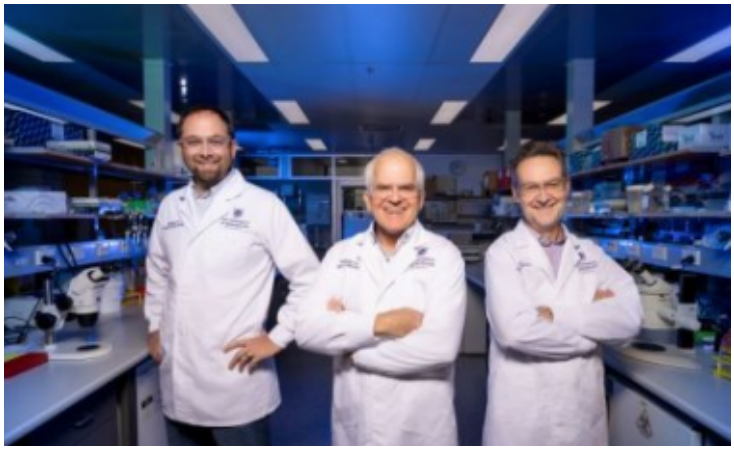
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ASIA EDITION

Australia explores deadly spider venom treatment for heart attacks with $23M funding

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There are currently no drugs in clinical use that prevent damage caused by heart attack



A potentially life-saving treatment containing venom from one of the world's deadliest spiders is one step closer to human trials, thanks to a $23 million investment in a Brisbane startup.

The drug candidate, which was developed by Australia-based University of Queensland (UQ) research team, uses a molecule found in the venom of the K'gari (Fraser Island) funnel web spider, and can potentially prevent damage caused by heart attacks and stroke.

It will now be able to progress to clinical trials after UQ's commercialisation company UniQuest licenced the drug candidate, IB001, to Brisbane start-up company Infensa Bioscience.

According to the researchers, "IB001 blocks the signals that causes heart cells to die, and when given immediately to heart attack victims could reduce damage to the heart and significantly improve outcomes for people with heart disease."

The drug candidate was developed in collaboration with Professor Peter Macdonald from the Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute and Professor Rob Widdop at Monash University.

Dr Smythe said the $23 million funding would go towards the drug's development and establishing the company.

The company also plans to raise additional funds to support the development of drugs to treat stroke and extend the life of donor hearts used for organ transplants.