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Demand booms for experimental mRNA in Australia

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Ensuring access to high-quality mRNA needed to develop new and innovative treatments



The University of Queensland (UQ) team has become the biggest supplier of experimental mRNA vaccines and therapies in Australia, with burgeoning demand from research and industry across the country.

The BASE facility is producing mRNA at UQ's Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology for pre-clinical research on vaccines, cancers and autoimmune diseases.

Director Associate Professor Tim Mercer said demand for BASE's products had rapidly escalated since it was established, with the scientific community keen to explore ways to use the revolutionary mRNA platform.

"We are now at the epicentre for mRNA production in Australia, providing access to high-quality mRNA at the scale needed to support early research and pre-clinical studies," Dr Mercer said.

He added, "Our team started out with 3 researchers about 18 months ago, and is likely to grow to about 40 people this time next year – all producing a new generation of mRNA vaccines and treatments. We've built more than 50 experimental vaccines and therapies, supplying mRNA to 34 labs at UQ alone."

Global healthcare company Sanofi toured BASE late last year to discuss potential collaborations under the Translational Science Hub.

Sanofi and the Queensland Government have agreed to establish a $280 million facility in Brisbane together with UQ and Griffith University.

Pharmaceutical companies are also investigating whether conventional vaccines and therapies could be better encoded within mRNA, which is easier to make and deliver.