

UQ research will move medicines to market more quickly

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Queensland is set to become a global leader in drug development, thanks to State Government funding of a \$1.73M University of Queensland project to move medicines into the market more quickly.

Queensland Deputy Premier, Treasurer and Minister for State Development, Trade and Innovation, Anna Bligh today announced a \$865,000 grant for UQ's Centre for Integrated Preclinical Drug Development, which conducts contract research via TetraQ.

The Centre for Integrated Preclinical Drug Development will use the grant to develop "new tools" for a drug development toolkit. UQ and industry partners vivoPharm Pty Ltd, Industrial Research Limited and Ground Zero Pharmaceuticals will contribute funds to the total of \$865,000.

"This initiative will cement Queensland's status as a globally competitive centre of excellence for pre-clinical drug development within the next three years," Executive Director of the centre and TetraQ Professor Maree Smith said.

Professor Smith said the "toolkit" would help modernise and streamline the development pathway of new pharmaceuticals, addressing an acknowledged blockage in the drug production pipeline that is causing significant international concern.

"The number of new drugs reaching the market has fallen over the past five years. This is due to a lack of innovation in the pathway of preclinical trials, which are required before drugs move into human trials and then to the market," she said.

"The centre aims to develop new tools to streamline the preclinical trials process, which will be made available to biotechnology companies via TetraQ. This toolkit will give TetraQ's clients a more predictive pathway from preclinical to human trials. This will improve productivity across the pharmaceuticals industry."

UQ Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Professor David Siddle congratulated Professor Smith and her team on attracting significant government and private industry funding.

"TetraQ is a leader in translating cutting-edge research into products that can lead to improvements in many lives," he said.

"In the longer term, elements of this toolkit may be licensed to the pharmaceutical industry. This has potential to generate significant revenue, and to expand the Australian drug development industry by creating jobs for highly-skilled scientists and training opportunities for PhD students," Professor Siddle said.

TetraQ began in May 2005 with \$8.1M in investment funds from the Smart State Research Facilities Fund. It quickly became a key provider of contract preclinical services for Australian biotechnology companies developing new pharmaceuticals. TetraQ was founded by UQ Professors Maree Smith, Istvan Toth, Rod Minchin and Ron Dickinson. It was the first contract research organisation in Australia to provide integrated preclinical services to the global pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries.

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