



Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

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NEW INSTITUTE SET TO REVOLUTIONISE ARTHRITIS TREATMENT

The Premier, Steve Bracks, today joined 76-year-old arthritis sufferer, Donald Kruger, to highlight a revolutionary new treatment for the crippling disease, which may remove the need for steroid drugs.

Mr Kruger developed arthritis when he was 50 and has endured over 25 operations on his feet, knees, hips, fingers and neck. Heavy pain killing drugs sometimes can make him disorientated.

“Arthritis has a devastating impact on individuals and families and it’s vitally important that we do everything possible to come up with better ways of treating this disease,” Mr Bracks said.

The new drug therapy aims to enable the body’s natural defences to work properly in people with rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory conditions, without the side effects of steroid-based treatments.

Clinical trials are expected within five years and the therapy is also expected to be useful in treating other diseases such as multiple sclerosis, asthma, psoriasis, colitis and lupus.

While Mr Kruger is realistic that new therapies under development may be too late to help him, he wants to raise awareness of the urgent need for better treatments.

Mr Bracks said the treatment was a great example of the work being carried out at the Monash Institute of Medical Research (MIMR), which he launched today.

“This project and others at the MIMR highlight how the consolidation of medical research and biotechnology in Victoria is producing great results,” Mr Bracks said.

“With a \$50 million budget and employing around 400 researchers and support staff, the MIMR heralds a new era of medical research by combining clinical research and teaching with high-level patient care.”

MIMR has involved a merger of several existing Monash University research institutes and the Southern Health Network, with the Victorian Government contributing \$1.5 million.

Founding centres making up the MIMR include the original five centres of Monash Institute of Reproduction and Development and Monash University’s Centre for Inflammatory Diseases and the Centre for Women’s Health. Southern Health clinical research groups are also collaborating.

“By formalising the links between the institutes, the MIMR provides better access to researchers, support staff, institutes and infrastructure to fight these diseases,” Mr Bracks said.

“It will also encourage knowledge information exchanges and local and international collaborations – some of the key aims of the Government’s biotech strategic development plan.”

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