

Media Release

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CMA Welcomes Chinese Herbs Trial for Treatment of Dementia

Complementary Medicines Australia (CMA) has welcomed the announcement by the National Institute of Complementary Medicine (NICM) of a clinical trial for a Chinese herbal medicine, Sailuotong, which has been shown, in pilot studies, to be effective in improving the cognitive and memory impairment associated with vascular dementia.

“This is promising news for the large number of Australians that suffer from this type of dementia, and for their carers and their families,” said Mr Carl Gibson, chief executive officer of CMA.

Vascular dementia is generally considered the second most common type of dementia, after Alzheimer’s disease. It is estimated that by 2050, nearly one million Australians will have dementia, a disease which already costs our healthcare system over \$6 billion each year.¹

“This research announcement by NICM comes hot on the tail of last week’s welcome news of a economic analysis that showed vitamin B₃ (nicotinamide) can save \$2 in healthcare costs for every \$1 spent, based on the ONTRAC study,² an Australian research paper that was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and which showed a 23% reduction in the risk of new skin cancers.”

“Over the last twenty years there has been exponential growth in the body of scientific knowledge in support of the use of complementary medicines, despite our industry not having received the same level of significant government funding that pharmaceutical medicines have enjoyed. In addition, greater investment by industry has been hindered by a lack of patentability or other incentives to innovation.”

“CMA is pleased to note that the Sansom review of medicines and medical devices regulation ‘*Report on the regulatory frameworks for complementary medicines and advertising of therapeutic goods*’ recommends that the Australian Government gives consideration to improving the competitiveness of the Australian complementary medicines industry by providing incentives for innovation.”

“Increasingly, we are seeing Australians turn to complementary medicines to improve their overall health and well-being. Innovative products, such as Sailuotong, developed, and tested by rigorous research, are the engine of growth for our industry and hold great promise in contributing to the health of Australians and the sustainability of our health system.”

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¹ NICM (2015): Alzheimer’s Australia <http://fightdemential.org.au>

² A Phase 3 Randomized Trial of Nicotinamide for Skin-Cancer Chemoprevention. *N Engl J Med* 2015; 373:1618-1626, 22 October, 2015, DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1506197

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