

Media Release

Mr Tim Pallas MP

Treasurer

Minister for Industrial Relations

Minister for Economic Development

Minister for Trade



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COVID NASAL SPRAY TREATMENT CLINICAL TRIALS TO BEGIN

A nasal medication that could reduce transmission of COVID-19 in homes and hospitals will soon begin clinical trials in Victoria through a new world-class medical manufacturing centre in Melbourne.

Treasurer Tim Pallas met with researchers at Monash University's Medicines Manufacturing Innovation Centre (MMIC) in Clayton to discuss preparations to trial the ground-breaking COVID-19 nasal spray later this year.

If the trials prove effective, heparin spray could quickly and easily be delivered with quick pumps in high-risk COVID settings such as medical wards or in the homes of COVID contacts, to reduce illness and transmission.

COVID-19 first infects the nose before spreading to the body, if there is not a strong enough immune response. By coating the virus's spike protein with heparin the virus is not able to penetrate into the cells of the nose and replicate. This will have the effect of reducing viral load and potential spread of the virus within the body.

Heparin is the second most widely used drug in the world and is primarily prescribed as a blood-thinner to treat or prevent blood clots.

The six-month clinical trial is being led by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, University of Melbourne, St Vincent's Hospital, Doherty Institute and Monash University, in collaboration with Oxford University. It is funded by \$4.2 million from the Andrews Labor Government's COVID-19 Research Fund.

Patient recruitment is set to commence in the coming months through Northern Health, with people presenting with respiratory conditions, who will then be tested for COVID and offered the treatment if they test positive. The trial will involve approximately 400 households.

If the trial yields positive results, Monash University's MMIC will prepare a business case to investigate the potential for local manufacture in Victoria.

The expansion of MMIC to Clayton has been funded through an \$8.58 million investment from the Victorian Higher Education State Investment Fund. Construction is expected to finish towards the end of 2023.

The MMIC is an initiative between the Victorian Government and the Monash Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (MIPS), established in Parkville in 2017, to support Victorian manufacturers to collaborate on innovative pharmaceutical projects and move them through to commercialisation.

Victoria's medtech sector is one of the fastest growing local industries, generating \$21.4 billion in revenue and \$3.5 billion in exports and supporting more than 31,000 jobs.

Quote attributable to Treasurer Tim Pallas

"Investing in medtech creates life-saving medicines and treatments – and thousands of high-skill jobs. Backing facilities like those at Monash enables our researchers to lead the world."

Quote attributable to Minister for Innovation, Medical Research and the Digital Economy Jaala Pulford

"This is an exciting trial and I'm thrilled to see it moving to the next stage. From day one our medical research community has been at the forefront of the pandemic response, and I wish the team every success with their work."

Quote attributable to MMIC Director Professor Michelle McIntosh

"We are grateful to the Victorian Government for their ongoing commitment to medical research and innovation, giving Victorians the confidence that we will be less reliant on other countries for essential medical products."

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