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PAIN SOCIETY

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **PROMISING RESULTS FROM RESEARCH INTO SNAIL VENOM TO TREAT CHRONIC PAIN**

Australian researchers are edging closer to developing new medications for chronic pain, based on venom from snails living at the bottom of the ocean.

As part of an international effort, Australian scientists are unlocking the potential of Conotoxins, powerful compounds found in the venom of marine snails.

Chief investigator on an NHMRC program grant, Professor Macdonald Christie, will present the latest developments at the annual conference of the Australian Pain Society in Sydney on April 9.

This comes as Australia and other countries search for alternatives to opioids, amid concern at widespread misuse of codeine and other opioids, and lack of effectiveness in treating chronic pain.

With anecdotal evidence that people are turning to cannabinoids as an alternative (but unproven) medication for reducing chronic pain, Professor Christie said: "Early indications are that Conotoxins are more effective than both opioids and cannabinoids, may have fewer side-effects and the additional benefit of treating the cause of pain".

Normally used to paralyse or kill prey, the Conotoxins appear to provide long-lasting pain relief through a range of mechanisms, such as blocking the pain signal through the nervous system.

Professor Christie is encouraged by preliminary findings from Australian researchers on Conotoxins:

- As well as alleviating pain, some kinds can have a curative effect in chronic pain states by reducing inflammation
- Conotoxins are in development that can be administered orally. This has previously been a limiting factor, as the only Conotoxins already in clinical use – the analgesic drug Prialt – is administered by intrathecal pump
- They can potentially be effective in reducing the symptoms of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

Professor Christie, a Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Sydney, said: "I am hopeful that Conotoxins might be in clinical use in less than 10 years, provided further money is available for trials".

International research into Conotoxins has been underway for decades and currently includes teams from the University of Queensland, the University of Melbourne, SAHMRI, and the University of Utah Health.

Chronic pain affects one in five Australians, and one in five GP consultations involves a patient with chronic pain.

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Australian Pain Society | [38th Annual Scientific Meeting](#) | 8-11 April 2018 | International Convention Centre Sydney

The Australian Pain Society (APS) is Australia's leading forum of university-trained health professionals (including GP and specialist doctors, nurses, occupational therapists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, psychologists and other allied health professionals and researchers) trained in the recognition, research, management and advocacy around all aspects of pain in Australia.