Venom research could yield gastrointestinal disease treatment

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Therapeutics inspired by venoms could provide the key to treatment for a common gastrointestinal disease. Credit: University of Queensland

Therapeutics inspired by venoms could provide the key to treatment for a common gastrointestinal disease if a collaboration between researchers from The University of Queensland and Danish biotech company Zealand Pharma A/S is successful.

UniQuest, UQ's research commercialisation company, today (20 February) announced a deal which combines UQ's expertise in identifying therapeutically-relevant bioactive peptides from venoms with

the peptide drug discovery and development expertise of Zealand Pharma.

Bioactive peptides are small proteins with potential to be developed as drugs.

UQ President and Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Høj said that under the agreement, Zealand Pharma would harness the proprietary peptide technology and world-leading expertise of UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB), as well as expertise from Flinders University in South Australia.

"UQ is ranked among the world's top universities for life sciences research and the IMB is world-renowned in peptide drug discovery, possessing one of the largest collections of animal venoms and extensive experience in identifying novel bioactive peptides from venoms," he said.

"Zealand Pharma has a strong track record and world-leading capabilities in the discovery and development of peptides for therapeutic use in gastrointestinal and metabolic diseases.

"We are delighted to combine the world-class facilities, and venom-based drug discovery expertise of IMB, with Zealand Pharma's trailblazing capabilities in peptide drug discovery and development in the under-served market of gastrointestinal disease."

Zealand Pharma and the researchers will work together to characterise venom-derived peptides that act against undisclosed targets to identify novel drug candidates for development by Zealand.

Executive Vice President and Chief Science Officer of Zealand Dr. Andrew Parker said accessing UQ's peptide libraries and technologies

was a key element in enhancing the company's peptide capabilities and expanding its future clinical pipeline.

"Working with UQ's world-class peptide expertise will provide an additional option for Zealand to identify novel peptide therapeutics against a range of drug targets to treat gastrointestinal and metabolic diseases," he said.

Provided by University of Queensland