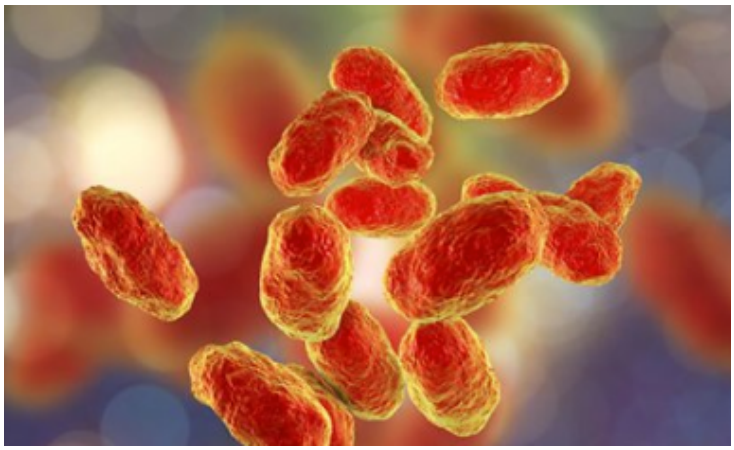
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Australia targets bacteria behind respiratory infections

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The bacteria relies heavily on a particular protein in the bacterial cell membrane for survival



Researchers in Australia have discovered a way to kill a type of bacteria that causes millions of respiratory infections in children and the elderly, paving the way for more effective treatment.

University of Queensland (UQ) researchers were able to deactivate a protein critical to the survival of *Haemophilus Influenzae* bacteria, which colonises the respiratory tract from early childhood.

According to the researchers, the bacteria was an example of the classic 'Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde' story, causing problems if it 'switched character'.

"Most of the time, these bacteria are harmless inhabitants of the respiratory tract, but they have the potential to shift their behaviour and cause diseases such as pneumonia and middle ear infections. More sinisterly, these bacteria can worsen asthma and bronchiectasis and slow recovery from viruses including COVID-19", said the researchers.

The findings are an important first step towards new treatments for people with serious respiratory infections.