

Australia investigates how to stop painful chemo for kids

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Aims to reduce painful side-effects for children undergoing cancer treatment

Stopping children undergoing chemotherapy from feeling pain and other debilitating side-effects is the focus of research underway at The University of Queensland (UQ), Australia.

Dr Hana Starobova from UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience has been awarded a Fellowship Grant from the Children's Hospital Foundation to continue her research to relieve children from the side-effects of cancer treatments.

"Although children have a higher survival rate than adults following cancer treatments, they can still be suffering side-effects well into their adulthood," Dr Starobova said.

In her previous research Dr Starobova found an anti-inflammatory drug substantially reduced nerve pain associated with a chemotherapy drug, and did not reduce the effectiveness of the cancer treatment.

Dr Starobova is currently analysing how specific drugs could prevent a cascade of inflammation caused by chemotherapy drugs, which lead to tingling and numbness in hands and feet, and muscle pain and weakness that makes everyday tasks, like walking and doing up buttons, a challenge.

She is focusing on Acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, one of the most frequently diagnosed cancers in children, with over 700 children diagnosed in Australia each year.