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Australia to launch revolutionary new cholesterol drug in next two years

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The new drug has the potential to help between 100,000 and 500,000 people in Australia



Hundreds of thousands of Australians with life-threatening high cholesterol are set to benefit from a revolutionary new pill following the successful research and trial by Professor Stephen Nicholls, Director of the Victorian Heart Institute and Victorian Heart Hospital, based at the Monash University Clayton campus.

More than 300 Australian patients with high cholesterol took part in the breakthrough four-year clinical trial involving 14,000 people in 32 countries.

Through the trial, the new cholesterol-lowering drug, bempedoic acid, demonstrated lowered low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol, commonly referred to as ‘bad cholesterol’, by 20-25 per cent; reduced cardiovascular complications by 13 per cent; reduced heart attacks by 23 per cent; and, reduced coronary revascularisations (a procedure to open blocked arteries) by 19 per cent.

Currently, 2.5 million Australians take statins to lower their cholesterol. Prof. Nicholls said about 20 per cent of patients on statins had tolerance issues and about 50 per cent of high-risk patients didn’t get their cholesterol down to target levels so they need other options.

“This new drug provides another option for lowering cholesterol and is particularly important for patients that cannot tolerate statins. That’s a real problem in clinical practice which limits our ability to effectively lower cholesterol in many patients,’’ Professor Nicholls said.

The new bempedoic acid drug – currently called Nexletol – is being developed by US-based Esperion Therapeutics and will go to the Therapeutics Goods Administration for approval for use in Australia. Professor Nicholls said he expected the drug to be available for Australian patients in the next two years.