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SURGERY, pills and injections could soon be a thing of the past as light emerges as the new way to treat cancer and soft-tissue injuries – without pain or side effects.

The treatments, which have been likened to therapies used in the science-fiction series *Star Trek*, have undergone 500 controlled studies, with many showing success.

Clinical trials that use light to kill skin cancers will begin in Australia this year, while a robot has just been developed by Melbourne's Swinburne University that uses light to treat soft-tissue injuries.

Researchers in Australia are at the forefront of these treatments, which could be used for everything from migraines and bad backs to ovarian cancer.

Dr Andrew Stephens, from the Hudson Institute of Medical Research in Melbourne, has trialled a new photodynamic drug by the Invion company called IVX-PO2 to kill ovarian cancer cells in petrie dishes.

"It has been very effective," he said. "It's not a case of will it or won't it work; it's a case of how effective it will be."