



20 MAY, 2021

## Monash team co-develops lung disease drug

Herald Sun, Melbourne



Page 1 of 1

# Monash team co-develops lung disease drug

**BRIGID O'CONNELL**  
HEALTH REPORTER

A DRUG Melbourne researchers jointly developed to dampen the immune driver of the incurable and often fatal lung disease silicosis will be tested in people for the first time this year.

Hudson Institute of Medical Research and Monash University researchers are also developing the first prog-

nosis test as part of their \$1.6m project, funded by the Medical Research Future Fund.

Hudson inflammation expert Michelle Tate said they wanted to be able to pick the 20 per cent of stone masons who were at risk of irreversible lung scarring, following inhalation of dangerous silica fibres while cutting artificial stone benchtops.

Their study will analyse blood samples for immune

signatures that can predict risk or detect how far their disease has progressed.

"Inflammasomes are a protein that's part of our immune system. It recognises these silica particles and drives these really strong inflammatory response," Associate Professor Tate said.

"There is a lot of evidence in mouse models that the inflammasome plays a key role in the development of silicosis

disease. We believe the inflammasome is a therapeutic target for a drug that inhibits it, and hopefully stops the progression of silicosis."

In addition to testing whether existing drugs on the market are effective, the Hudson team has teamed up with a commercial partner in the US to developing a new inflammasome-inhibitor, which will be tested in a clinical trial overseas in the next six months.