

# Snails a key to future pain relief

A CHEMICAL compound found in the venom of toxic Australian marine snails could eventually replace morphine in the treatment of chronic pain, Melbourne researchers say.

ACV1 has been patented by University of Melbourne scientists after being isolated from snails found on the Great Barrier Reef.

Researchers believe

ACV1 could pave the way for a new era of treatment for chronic pain associated with cancer, AIDS and arthritis, without the addiction and side effects associated with morphine.

Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Associate Professor Bruce Livett said the research team was now seeking a commercial partner to begin human

trials and develop it as a medical treatment.

"One company already has a drug from a coneshell toxin (conotoxin) that has reached the final stages of human trials," Professor Livett said.

"But when administered to some patients it has given unwanted side effects that include raised blood pressure."

The drug works by

blocking the peripheral nervous system, responsible for the transmission of pain from cuts, broken bones or internal injuries.

Professor Livett said the global market for drugs to treat chronic pain was in excess of \$1 billion.

While other competing drugs needed to be injected into the spinal column, ACV1 could be injected into the muscle or fat layer of patients.