

Cannabis hits the spots

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Aussie firm flying high after acne cream results

TEENAGERS won't just be smoking pot on the sly in the future, they could be smearing it on their faces to cure zits.

Aussie company Botanix is developing the first new acne treatment in 20 years that aims to fight pimples using a synthetic version of cannabidiol.

But it won't get teens high because it uses the nonpsychotropic molecules of cannabis. Botanix reported to the Australian Stock Exchange yester-

day about its first safety study of the cannabis compound BTX 1503 on humans.

The study found the compound "has an excellent safety profile, with little to no skin irritation and no severe adverse events were recorded".

The most common adverse effect was skin dryness. Botanix executive director Matthew Callahan said phase 2 clinical trials of the treatment would

begin on acne patients in Australia in the next few months.

Existing acne treatments involve antibiotics and a drug called Roaccutane which has been linked to birth defects and in the US requires users to be put on a suicide watch program.

In 2014, a German study at Lubeck University found cannabidiol controlled oil production in skin gland tissue in a

petri dish and also had anti-inflammatory effects.

"Collectively, our findings suggest that, due to the combined lipostatic, antiproliferative and anti-inflammatory effects, CBD has potential as a promising therapeutic agent for the treatment of acne vulgaris," the study found.

Mr Callahan said there were plenty of reports of people using crude extracts of the can-

nabis plant to treat acne and it having a positive effect but no one knew which molecules made the difference.

His company isolated the molecule that was active against acne and then made a synthetic version.

Once data from initial clinical studies has been gathered, Botanix plans to shift most of the clinical development to the US and launch its drug there.

The government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on venture capital to help Australian medical research ideas get off the ground but without the later stage clinical trial expertise ideas will still go overseas, he said.

"Just \$5-10 million would make a massive difference," he said.

"Australia remains a fantastic regulatory environment to get new products into the clinic and accelerate them into early patient studies.