



# A good night's sleep may be down to bacteria

## **BUSINESS**

A Queensland company is pursuing the idea that what's in your stomach may be causing insomnia.



A Queensland company is investigating the role of bacteria in insomnia

The Sunshine Coast-based biopharmaceutical company Servatus has begun recruiting for a clinical trial with the Prince Charles Hospital using an oral liquid form of microbial biotherapeutics, or live micro-organisms.

Estimates from the Sleep Health Foundation were that almost 60 per cent of Australians suffer from at least one chronic sleep condition and about 15 per cent had chronic insomnia.



Servartus' Dr Wayne Finlayson said it was an important trial and a first for Australia.

“With an improved understanding of the microbiome-gut-brain axis and how the interaction between these organs can affect sleep, Servartus is hoping to deliver a new treatment for insomnia,” he said.

Such a treatment may be some years off but the company is not stopping at insomnia.

It raised \$7.5 million from investors earlier this year to progress its microbial biotherapeutics clinical programs targeting serious autoimmune conditions like rheumatoid arthritis.

It also holds other patents for various microbial biotherapeutics, including for the treatment of wound infections, respiratory infections, inflammatory conditions, and conditions of the gastrointestinal tract.

Prince Charles Hospital Sleep Disorders Centre director Dr Deanne Curtin said there was a definable gap in the development of safe and effective long-term solutions for insomnia.

She said many people turned to over-the-counter and prescription drugs but this was short term and there were “undesirable side effects”.

“To date, the role of microbiome in sleep health has been under-recognised and under-researched, however there is a link between the gut microbiome and sleep through modulating inflammation, regulating neurotransmitter synthesis and organising human circadian rhythm,” she said.

“That is why influencing the microbiome to a healthier composition could offer a promising new treatment option for insomnia.”