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Northern Beaches Hospital to take part in world-first cannabis trial for cancer patients

Medicinal cannabis will be given to 250 of cancer patients at hospitals across Australia, including Northern Beaches Hospital as part of an exciting groundbreaking trial.

Northern Beaches Hospital is taking part in a groundbreaking trial to see if medicinal cannabis can help prevent nausea or sickness in patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Around 250 patients will be part of the Australian-wide study.

Up to 10 of those will be cancer patients from the Frenchs Forest facility.

“This is the first cancer clinical trial at Northern Beaches Hospital using an investigative product,” Dr Antony Mersiades, medical oncologist and head of oncology services, said.

“It is a top level study to ask a question as to whether it works.

“It is huge for the hospital and very exciting.”



Dr Antony Mersiades at the Northern Beaches Hospital in Frenchs Forest. Picture: Christian Gilles

He said it had been a goal of his to get the department access to trials since the new \$600m hospital opened at the end of October 2018.

The hospital will be involved in the stage three component of the trial which will see patients who suffer severe nausea or sickness due to chemotherapy treatment, take either the oral cannabinoid medicine THC and CBD or a placebo.

Dr Mersiades said preliminary results from the NSW Government-funded trial, sponsored by the University of Sydney, showed the cannabis capsules had a significant improvement in nausea and vomiting in people undergoing chemotherapy.

A quarter of the patients taking medicinal cannabis experienced no vomiting and nausea, compared to 14 per cent of people who took a placebo.

Dr Mersiades said the earlier studies found that one in five who took medicinal cannabis had moderate to severe sedation and one in 10 reported dizziness, but that the reduction in sickness was a clear benefit.



Dr Antony Mersiades and patient Marion McGowan at the Northern Beaches Hospital in Frenchs Forest. Picture: Christian Gilles

Dr Mersiades, who lives in Fairlight, and previously worked at Manly Hospital, said trials gave northern beaches patients the opportunity to try the latest treatments.

Cancer patient Marion McGowan, 62, of Collaroy Plateau, has been having chemotherapy for six months.

While she hasn't suffered too badly from sickness, she said anything that can help others get through it was good.

She said Dr Mersiades and the team had been fantastic during her cancer journey.

“Their unwavering support and encouragement is second to none, and I feel truly blessed to have had them all in my life over the last few months,” she said.

Dr Mersiades said they had not yet selected patients for the trial, but that the process would start soon.

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