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ROCKeT funding boost for chronic post-surgical pain trial

An Australian-led international trial exploring if ketamine – commonly administered by anaesthetists for pain relief in major operations – can reduce the risk of going on to develop chronic pain after surgery has been given a funding boost of nearly one million dollars by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Chronic post-surgical pain is a common and debilitating complication of major surgery, with significant impacts on quality of life.

Nearly 5000 participants are planned to be enrolled in the ROCKeT (Reduction of Chronic Post-surgical Pain with Ketamine) trial which is evaluating the effectiveness of perioperative ketamine to reduce the risk of chronic pain after operations. The trial recently received a \$A967,000 grant from the NHMRC's Clinical Trials and Cohort Studies scheme.

The trial's chief principal investigator is anaesthetist Professor Philip Peyton from Austin Health and the Department of Critical Care, University of Melbourne. Professor Peyton is a leading researcher with the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) Clinical Trials Network.

“Demonstration of effectiveness with ketamine has important implications for routine clinical practice for anaesthesiologists and acute pain services and would lead to significant improvements in longer term health outcomes for patients undergoing surgery in the future,” Professor Peyton explained.

The ROCKeT trial received an NHMRC grant of \$A4.8 million in 2017 and additional funding from the ANZCA Foundation for long term follow-up and biomarker sub-studies. The primary trial endpoint of chronic pain at 12 months after surgery has recently been revised to three months based on the new World Health Organization International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) definition of chronic post-surgical pain.

Professor Peyton said while the ROCKet trial was one of many international clinical trials that were hit hard by the “once in a century” COVID-19 pandemic with delays and drug supply issues, the trial was now approaching 90 per cent of its hospital recruitment target.

“The trial involves 36 hospitals across Australia, New Zealand and Hong Kong and we anticipate recruitment will be completed by mid-2024. I sincerely thank sites for their hard work and perseverance to complete the trial.”

For more information or to request interviews please contact ANZCA Media Manager Carolyn Jones on +61 408 259 369 or cjones@anzca.edu.au.