



New therapies for depression with Australia's Microba and Boston biotech Holobiome

A Queensland Government grant will support Boston-based Holobiome to access Microba's world-leading technology to develop new therapies for depression.

Funding from the Queensland Government's Biomedical Voucher Program will be used to examine the impact of specific gut bacteria in laboratory models of depression, and to analyse stool in human clinical samples.

The project – valued in excess of \$500,000 – will support a partnership with Boston-based Holobiome, a private biotechnology company developing human-derived bacteria that target the “gut-brain-axis”, for depression and other conditions related to the nervous system.

The partnership will bring Microba's world-leading expertise in metagenomic sequencing and sophisticated bioinformatics tools together with Holobiome's promising microbiome therapeutic pipeline in an effort to change lives on a global scale.

Microba and Holobiome's collaboration will lead the way in analysing the impact of specific bacteria on the gut microbiome (community of bacteria living in the gut) in depression.

Microba CEO Blake Wills said that the combined capabilities of both companies would assist in potentially changing lives.

“The high-resolution analyses using Microba's proprietary data processing platform will explore the gut microbiome of clinical samples,” he said.

“This will help to identify if specific gut bacteria are linked with depression, which has the potential to positively impact the lives of those suffering from clinical depression.”

The Queensland Government will provide matched funding for this research project to enable faecal samples to be analysed in Microba's world-leading laboratory based in Brisbane.

Queensland Minister for State Development, the Hon Kate Jones MP, said that Microba's work had been recognised at the 2018 AusBiotech excellence awards where the company was named as the Australian Emerging Company of the Year.

“The Biomedical Voucher Program grant will assist the company to continue valuable work on analysis aimed at identifying links between gut bacteria and mental health conditions such as depression,” Ms Jones said.

Holobiome CEO Philip Strandwitz said that this international collaboration will support advancement of their existing microbiome products in development, in addition to providing a better mechanistic understanding of the link between the gut microbiome and disorders of the brain, like depression.

“Depression is a tremendous and underserved global health problem. We strongly believe that international collaborations like what we plan to do here with Microba will be essential in furthering our understanding of the disease, with the ultimate goal to create solutions for those who desperately need them,” he said.

“Our work and others in the field have identified possible mechanistic links between depression and the gut microbiome. Given the need, we're excited to have the chance to leverage our microbiome discovery platform to pursue this, and grateful to the Queensland Government for the funding.”

Microba is rapidly increasing its operations worldwide, with an increasing number of active collaborations and research projects with both local

and international biotechnology companies.

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