

TCM drug for stroke to undergo clinical trials

BY LIAW WY-CIN

THE makers of a traditional Chinese medicine for stroke patients want to put it through its paces in a Western-style clinical trial.

If it delivers on its claims to help these patients recover their movement and thinking abilities, its developers want to persuade Western-trained doctors to use the herbal drug as part of mainstream treatment.

Made in China, it is being marketed by Singapore-based pharmaceutical company Moleac.

The trial on the product NeuroAid, to be carried out by a non-profit group of doctors from Asia, Australia and Europe, will start next month at hospitals here and in the Philippines.

The two-year study will be funded by a grant from the National Medical Research Council. It will rope in 1,100 patients from hospitals in Singapore and the Philippines within 48 hours of their suffering a stroke.

Changi General Hospital will start the trial next month, followed by Tan Tock Seng, Singapore General and National University hospitals, said Moleac's chief executive David Picard. Patients will be assessed periodically over three months, and their recovery rates monitored.

NeuroAid, made from 14 Chinese herbs, is available here, but only as a "Chinese proprietary medicine"; in the region, it has been labelled a food supplement.

Five-year-old Moleac, based in the Biopolis in North Buona Vista, aims to get the drug accepted in mainstream Western-hospitals as it wants to take the product beyond China.

Mr Picard said: "To get more Western-trained doctors to prescribe it, we need clinical trials with Western-trained doctors, in a Western clinical environment, to support what we've observed."

The Singapore-based non-profit group doing the study calls itself the Chimes Society. Chimes stands for Chinese Medicine NeuroAid Efficacy on Stroke Recovery.

The society draws its members from about 20 doctors and stroke specialists from France, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

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