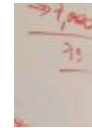


'Love drug' may treat abdominal pain

31 January 2014

Australian researchers have found a key to treating chronic abdominal pain may lie in a hormone that induces labour and encourages social bonding.



The researchers, led by The University of Queensland's Professor Paul Alewood from and the University of Adelaide's Dr Stuart Brierley, have developed a version of the hormone oxytocin to treat chronic abdominal pain associated with conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome.

Oxytocin is known as 'the love drug' for its ability to enhance social interactions including maternal behaviour, partnership and bonding.

Professor Alewood, from UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience, said the molecule they had developed – a version of oxytocin with improved stability – showed significant potential in alleviating abdominal pain.

"It can potentially survive in the digestive tract until it reaches the gut," he said.

"This molecule acts on oxytocin nerve receptors in the bowel, which display increased sensitivity in conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome."

Professor Alewood said it had no effect on healthy gut tissue, which was an important advantage in drug development where minimising side effects is crucial.

Chronic abdominal pain is a major health problem, with irritable bowel syndrome alone affecting around 11 per cent of the Western population.

Despite the high number of sufferers, there are currently no drugs that directly treat abdominal pain.

The research, published overnight in the scientific journal *Nature Communications*, was supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Research Council.

To make a tax-deductible donation to Professor Alewood's pain research, visit www.imb.uq.edu.au/donate or call +61 (07) 3346 2134.

To discuss commercial opportunities associated with this research, contact Dr Mark Ashton on m.ashton@uniquet.com.au or +61 (07) 3346 2186.

The Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) is a research institute of The University of Queensland that aims to improve quality of life by advancing medical genomics, drug discovery and biotechnology.

Media contact: IMB Communications Manager Bronwyn Adams, 0418 575 247, 07 3346 2134, b.adams@imb.uq.edu.au.

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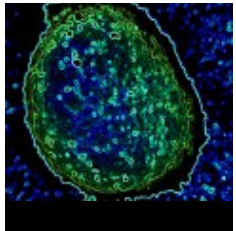
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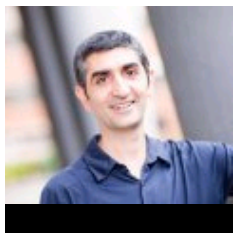
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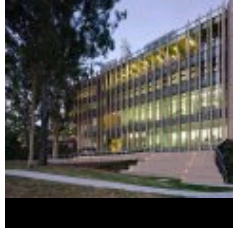
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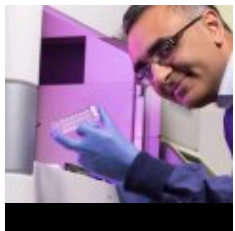
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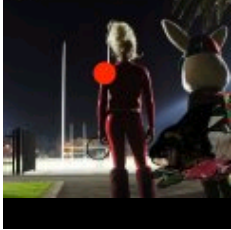
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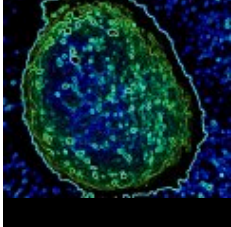
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