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Developing Better Ways to Measure Side Effects of Cystinosis Treatments

Researchers at the University of Sunderland are developing new treatments for cystinosis, a rare genetic condition. One of our recent discoveries is a promising cysteamine-based treatment candidate called CF10.

A key focus of our work is creating new versions of cysteamine that may cause fewer side effects. Current cysteamine treatments can be broken down by the body into compounds that produce a strong, unpleasant odour, which can have a significant impact on quality of life for people living with cystinosis.

To help identify treatments with a better side effect profile, we need reliable ways to measure these odour-causing compounds during laboratory testing. However, detecting these compounds in biochemical and cell-based studies is technically challenging.

Thanks to Seedcorn funding from Cystinosis Ireland, we have investigated a range of fluorescent detection methods that can identify one of the key odour-causing compounds, methanethiol. We are pleased to report that we can now detect methanethiol at very low levels using a commercially available fluorescent marker. This method is currently being evaluated in laboratory metabolism studies and shows promise as a valuable tool for future drug development.

Although the project has presented several technical challenges, these findings represent an important step towards developing improved cysteamine therapies with fewer treatment-related side effects. We are grateful for the continued support of Cystinosis Ireland and the wider cystinosis community as we continue this research.

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