

Press Release

October 28, 2019 FOR IMMEDIATE REALEASE CONTACT:

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Non-Addictive Painkiller to Fight Opioid Crisis

With the support of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), research scientists at Wake Forest School of Medicine in North Carolina have been conducting a study to find a safe, non-addictive pain killer to help fight the Nation's current opioid crisis.

An article in Science Daily discusses the research. The objective of the study is to design and test a chemical compound that would work on both the mu opioid receptor, the main component in the most effective prescription pain killers, and the nociceptin receptor, which opposes or blocks the abuse and dependence-related side effects of mu-targeted opioids. Current opioid pain drugs, such as fentanyl and oxycodone, work only on the mu opioid receptor, which also produces unwanted side effects -- respiratory depression, abuse potential, increased sensitivity to pain and physical dependence.

The scientists developed "AT-121", an experimental analgesic that combines both activities in an appropriate balance in one single molecule. In the study, scientists' observed that AT-121 showed the same level of pain relief as an opioid, but at a 100-times lower dose than morphine. At that dose, it also blunted the addictive effects of oxycodone, a commonly abused prescription drug. AT-121 not only gave effective pain relief without abuse potential, it also lacked other opioid side-effects that patients typically struggle with, such as itch, respiratory depression, tolerance and dependence.

Scientists maintain the data shows that targeting the nociceptin opioid receptor not only reduced addictive and other side-effects, it provided effective pain relief and because this data was in nonhuman primates, a closely related species to humans, was also significant because it showed that compounds, such as AT-121, have the translational potential to be a viable opioid alternative or replacement for prescription opioids. Scientists feel that since AT-121 was effective at blocking abuse potential of prescription opioids, much like buprenorphine does for heroin, they are hopeful it could be used to treat pain and opioid abuse.

Next steps include conducting additional preclinical studies to collect more safety data, and then if all goes well, applying to the Food and Drug Administration for approval to begin clinical trials in people.

NIDA is The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit www.drugabuse.gov.

Science Daily provides up to date breaking science news. To read the full article please visit www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/08/180829143821.htm

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on

www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org