

Potential treatment for Huntington's disease discovered by NUIG researchers

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By admin



A file image of nerve cells, which are affected by Huntington's disease.

Collaboration with University of Barcelona aims to find cure for 'relentlessly fatal' condition

Researchers at [NUI Galway](#) have discovered what they say are encouraging early signs for a potential treatment for Huntington's disease.

Huntington's is an inherited neurodegenerative disease that causes serious cognitive and movement defects.

Sometimes called Huntington's chorea, it is "debilitating, untreatable and relentlessly fatal", according to the researchers.

Prof [Robert Lahue](#) and his team at the Centre for Chromosome Biology and the Galway Neuroscience Centre at NUI Galway collaborated with scientists at the University of Barcelona.

They targeted an enzyme called histone deacetylase 3 (HDAC3), which is thought to alter important biochemical mechanisms in the brain of Huntington's disease patients and thereby accelerate disease progression.

The study published on Thursday in the journal *Scientific Reports* shows that blocking HDAC3 with an experimental compound in a pre-clinical model of Huntington's disease slows cognitive decline and delays the onset of molecular signs of neurodegeneration.

While these results are preliminary, the data shows that the onset of Huntington's disease is delayed when HDAC3 is blocked in this pre-clinical setting. This is an encouraging first step because currently there are no effective treatments that target the root cause of the disease," Prof Lahue said.

Prof Lahue noted the key role of the Spanish collaborators and co-authors, Dr Silvia Ginés and [Nuria Suelves](#) from the University of Barcelona.

Prof Lahue and Dr Ginés have applied for additional funding to develop the treatment further and to assess additional safety aspects.

[Science Foundation Ireland](#) and the European Huntington's Disease Network supported the research in [Ireland](#).

The Huntington's Disease Association of Ireland estimates, based on research in [Northern Ireland](#) and a population of 4.67 million in 2011, that there are about 500 people here with the condition and a further 2,500 at risk.

While Huntington's disease is relatively rare, over 9,000 family members in Ireland may require support and information, according to the organisation.

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