

Scientists seek urgent treatment for fatal sleeping sickness

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Urgently-needed new treatment for a parasitic disease is being investigated in research led at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland.

Human African Trypanosomiasis, also known as sleeping sickness, affects between 50,000 and 70,000 people in Africa and South America. It is transmitted through the bite of the tsetse fly and attacks the [nervous system](#) and [brain](#), leading to fever, headaches and disturbed sleep patterns.

Without treatment, the disease is fatal but a new drug to tackle it is being developed in a project led at Strathclyde, with partners from the Universities of Dundee and Glasgow. It has received funding of £648,000 from the Medical Research Council.

Development of the drug is currently at the early pre-clinical stage.

The research is among the technologies which will be on display at Expo '10, an event showcasing innovative Strathclyde research to business representatives, policy-makers and third sector organisations.

Professor Colin Suckling, of Strathclyde's Department of Pure and Applied Chemistry, is leading the research. He said: "Sleeping sickness is a threat to the health of millions of people but is extremely difficult to treat. Giving the treatments currently available for it is problematic and these treatments have their own toxicity.

"At the second stage of the disease, when it gets into the brain, the patients have to be treated in hospital and this is often difficult to bring about. We need to develop a treatment which can deal with both forms of [sleeping sickness](#) at an early stage- safely, effectively, and, ideally, administered orally."

Provided by University of Strathclyde

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