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“Receptor-mediated siRNA delivery in Sjögren's Syndrome”

Recipient of Student Fellowship Award

LAY ABSTRACT:

Sjögren's syndrome (SS) is an autoimmune disorder, in which the body's own cells destroy glands that produce tears and saliva. SS frequently causes dry eyes and dry mouth, but may also cause dryness elsewhere, fatigue, difficulty swallowing, and poor sleep. Most SS patients are women in their late 40s. Currently, there is no cure. Treatment focuses on improving quality of life.

In China, Western medications are available to treat SS, but most patients also use Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). TCM uses a holistic, individualized approach to healthcare. This approach can be helpful in diseases like SS, where patients can have different symptoms and respond differently to treatment. With the increasing use of TCM in the West, we want to determine how TCM can complement Western diagnosis and treatment of SS. We will investigate if TCM diagnosis can help identify SS patients and how Chinese SS patients manage their symptoms.

SCIENTIFIC ABSTRACT AND RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

Sjögren's syndrome (SS) is a systemic autoimmune disorder, in which lymphocytes attack and destroy exocrine glands that produce tears and saliva. SS commonly causes dry eyes and dry mouth, but may also cause dryness in other organs, fatigue, difficulty swallowing, and sleep apnea. SS can also lead to extraglandular manifestations, including arthralgias, thyroiditis, renal involvement, peripheral neuropathy, cutaneous vasculitis, and lymphoma.

In China, Western medications are available to treat SS, but most patients also use Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). One-third of American patients with chronic rheumatologic disorders have used TCM, yet it is still unclear how TCM can play a role in the diagnosis and management of such conditions, including SS. This project aims to 1) objectively document whether TCM pattern diagnosis can be used to help identify patients with SS and 2) independently record the role of TCM in managing Chinese SS patients.