

Replacing inhalers with a new drug

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A common treatment for asthma requires use of an inhaler that is used to deliver steroids and other drugs in an aerosol form.

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Researchers from Columbia University and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) are redesigning a drug compound first created to calm anxiety without dangerous side effects.

The asthma project is halfway into a four-year grant, and the researchers have confirmed that their compounds reduce airway inflammation, while limiting blood-brain barrier exposure. This means the compounds can target GABAA receptors in the lung responsible for asthma symptoms without affecting similar receptors in the brain.

More than a dozen collaborators from other institutions are teaming with UWM faculty on drug discovery initiatives aimed at cancer, chronic pain and infection.

To manage risk, drug companies are relying more and more on academic researchers to conduct the early stages of drug discovery.