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Rescue of hearing by adenine base editing in a humanized mouse model of Usher syndrome type 1F

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Usher syndrome type 1F (USH1F), characterized by congenital hearing loss and progressive loss of vision, is caused by mutations in the *PCDH15* gene. In the Ashkenazi population, a recessive truncation mutation accounts for a significant proportion of USH1F cases. Here, we report that adenine base editing can correct the mutation in a humanized mouse model of USH1F. We generated a mouse line that is homozygous for the human mutation; we developed a humanized Hydin^{3599T} mouse model for USH1F. Microscopy of the mouse cochlear hair bundle revealed stereocilia fusion and exhibited profound balance deficits, which are hallmarks of vestibular dysfunction. Delivery of adenine base editor (ABE) and a single-guide RNA (sgRNA) that recognizes the *PCDH15* sequence and function. We packaged a split-intein ABE into dual adeno-associated virus (AAV) vectors and delivered them into cochleae of neonatal USH1F mice. Hearing was not restored in a *Pcdh15* homozygous mutant mouse model, which lacks the cytoplasmic domain of PCDH15 and is functionally null. Our results demonstrate that base editing can correct a clinically relevant mutation in the *PCDH15* mutation in the cochlea and restore hearing.

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Keywords

Usher syndrome · PCDH15 · hair cell · cochlea · stereocilia · vestibulum · gene therapy · gene editing · base editor · AAV

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