

1 **Title:** Nonsense-mediated mRNA decay efficiency varies in choroideremia providing a target to boost
2 small molecule therapeutics

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19 **Abstract**

20 Choroideremia (CHM) is an x-linked recessive chorioretinal dystrophy, with 30% caused by nonsense
21 mutations in the *CHM* gene resulting in an in-frame premature termination codon (PTC). Nonsense
22 mediated decay (NMD) is the cell's natural surveillance mechanism, that detects and destroys PTC
23 containing transcripts, with UPF1 being the central NMD modulator. NMD efficiency can be variable
24 amongst individuals with some transcripts escaping destruction, leading to the production of a
25 truncated non-functional or partially functional protein. Nonsense suppression drugs, such as ataluren,
26 target these transcripts and read-through the PTC, leading to the production of a full length functional
27 protein. Patients with higher transcript levels are considered to respond better to these drugs, as more
28 substrate is available for read-through. Using RT-qPCR, we show that *CHM* mRNA expression in
29 blood from nonsense mutation CHM patients is 2.8-fold lower than controls, and varies widely
30 amongst patients, with 40% variation between those carrying the same UGA mutation (c.715 C>T;
31 p.[R239*]). These results indicate that although NMD machinery is at work, efficiency is highly
32 variable and not wholly dependent on mutation position. No significant difference in *CHM* mRNA
33 levels was seen between two patients' fibroblasts and their iPSC-derived RPE. There was no
34 correlation between *CHM* mRNA expression and genotype, phenotype or *UPF1* transcript levels.
35 NMD inhibition with caffeine was shown to restore *CHM* mRNA transcripts to near wildtype levels.
36 Baseline mRNA levels may provide a prognostic indicator for response to nonsense suppression
37 therapy, and caffeine may be a useful adjunct to enhance treatment efficacy where indicated.

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41 Introduction

42

43 Choroideremia (CHM [MIM: 303100]) is an x-linked recessive chorioretinal dystrophy that affects
44 approximately 1 in 50,000 – 100,000 individuals (1). CHM is characterised by a progressive loss of
45 vision, starting with night blindness in early childhood, followed by peripheral field loss and
46 eventually leading to complete blindness in late middle age. CHM is caused by mutations in the *CHM*
47 gene (MIM: 300390), located on chromosome *Xq21.2*, it spans ~150 kb and is composed of 15 exons.
48 It encodes the ubiquitously expressed 653 amino acid protein, Rab Escort Protein 1 (REP1). REP1 is
49 involved in intracellular trafficking of vesicles and post-translational modification of Rab-proteins.

50

51 Thirty percent of CHM cases are caused by nonsense mutations, resulting in an in-frame premature
52 termination codon (PTC)(1). Nonsense mediated mRNA decay (NMD) is the cell's natural
53 surveillance mechanism, which detects and destroys PTC containing transcripts. Typically, PTCs
54 found more than 50-55 nucleotides upstream of the last exon-exon junction are described as being
55 marked for destruction(2). However, exceptions to this rule have been observed. For example, in T-
56 cell receptor- β , PTCs located within 50 nucleotides of the last exon-exon junction are still degraded
57 (3). In the case of the β -globin gene (MIM: 141900), PTCs in close proximity to an AUG codon
58 evade NMD and trigger translation re-initiation (4). NMD is a complex multifactorial mechanism that
59 is intrinsically linked to translation. UPF1 is the central NMD factor, it is a RNA dependent ATPase
60 and an ATP-dependent RNA helicase that is recruited to mRNA and undergoes a cycle of
61 phosphorylations and dephosphorylations (5). Although NMD is described primarily as a surveillance
62 mechanism, it also plays an important role in the regulation of normal gene expression and response
63 to cellular stress (5, 6).

64

65 Some PTC-containing transcripts escape NMD, leading to the expression of a truncated partially
66 functional or non-functional protein. Nonsense suppression drugs exploit these PTC-containing

67 transcripts. They bind to the ribosomal subunit and increase the ability of a near cognate aminoacyl-
68 tRNA to compete with the eukaryotic release factors (eRFs) for binding to the A-site. An amino acid
69 is added to the growing polypeptide chain, effectively allowing ‘read-through’ of the PTC, leading to
70 production of the full length functional protein (7). We have previously shown that small molecule
71 drugs, PTC124 and PTC414, restore rep1/REP1 activity in the *chm^{ru848}* zebrafish model and a patient
72 *CHM^{Y42X}* fibroblast cell line(8), whereas it was less effective in *CHM^{K248X}* fibroblasts and induced
73 pluripotent stem cell (iPSC) derived retinal pigment epithelium (RPE)(9).

74

75 It has been suggested that the response to nonsense suppression drugs is greater in patients with
76 higher baseline transcripts, providing more substrate for drug action, as a result of lower NMD
77 efficiency (10). NMD efficiency is known to be variable between individuals (11), however it is not
78 yet fully understood what governs these differences. Linde *et al.* (2007) found patients with the same
79 mutation, p.(W1282*), in the cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator gene (*CFTR*
80 [MIM:602421]), had widely variable transcript levels, indicating that NMD is not entirely governed
81 by PTC position alone(10).

82

83 Baseline mRNA levels may be used as prognostic indicators of treatment outcome and inhibition of
84 the NMD pathway could be used as an adjunct to boost transcripts for nonsense suppression. Caffeine
85 has been identified as an NMD inhibitor, due to its inhibitory action on SMG1 kinase activity (12).
86 Ullrich’s disease (MIM:254090) is a muscular dystrophy, caused by mutations in the collagen VI
87 genes. Caffeine has been shown to rescue the phenotype in Ullrich’s disease fibroblasts, by increasing
88 the level of collagen VI $\alpha 2$ mRNA and protein, resulting in efficient integration into the collagen VI
89 triple helix(13). Co-administration of the NMD inhibitor NMDI-1 with the nonsense suppression
90 drug, gentamicin, has been shown to restore full length protein in a model of Hurler syndrome (MIM:
91 607014)(14).

92

93 In preparation for a clinical trial with PTC124 (ataluren) for CHM, we examined NMD efficiency in
94 nonsense mutation CHM patients, determining relative *CHM* and *UPF1* mRNA transcript levels in
95 blood, fibroblasts and iPSC-derived RPE. We have shown that NMD efficiency is variable in
96 nonsense mutation CHM patients, and does not correlate with genotype or phenotype. NMD
97 inhibition increases *CHM* transcript levels and could be explored as an adjunct for the treatment of
98 nonsense-mediated diseases.

99

100 **Results**

101

102 **Variable *CHM* mRNA expression in patient whole blood**

103 *CHM* transcript levels in whole blood from 9 *CHM* male patients with nonsense mutations (mean age
104 49 ± 15 years) and 6 age and sex-matched healthy controls (mean age 45 ± 15 years) were measured
105 using RT-qPCR. Patient mutations are shown in Figure 1A and Table 1. *CHM* transcript levels were
106 reduced in all patients. Overall, mean *CHM* mRNA expression in patients was significantly reduced to
107 $36.3 \pm 7.3\%$ of control ($p=0.002$) (Figure 1B). A large variability in transcript levels amongst patients
108 was seen, ranging from 12.5 to 81.2% of wild type levels. These results indicate that a proportion of
109 transcripts are escaping NMD. In our cohort, 4 patients have a c.715 C>T; p.(R239*) UGA mutation;
110 in these patients, *CHM* transcript levels ranged from 13 to 52.6%. No correlation between *CHM*
111 mRNA transcript level and genotype was found (Figure 1C).

112

113 We next analysed the levels of *UPF1* in patient blood to determine if there was a correlation between
114 expression of genes encoding proteins involved in the NMD pathway, and mRNA levels of *CHM*.
115 There was no significant difference in *UPF1* expression between patients and controls. However,
116 there was a large variation in *UPF1* mRNA expression amongst patients, ranging from 44.3 to
117 228.1%, compared to wildtype levels (Figure 2). Except for P2 and P7, all other patients had higher
118 *UPF1* expression compared to controls. No correlation between *CHM* and *UPF1* transcript levels was
119 observed ($r=0.07$).

120

121 A genotype-phenotype correlation does not exist for choroideremia patients(15). In this population,
122 the relationship between phenotype (age and fundus autofluorescence [FAF] size) and *CHM* transcript
123 levels was investigated, but no statistically significant correlation was found ($p=0.21$). Although it is
124 important to note that in this population, there was also no correlation between age and FAF area ($p =$

125 0.53). So while the multivariate linear model did not suggest statistical significance, it did improve the
126 correlation over any single factor correlation. Therefore, further investigation in a larger patient cohort
127 may be needed to determine actual interaction.

128

129 **Tissue specific NMD variation**

130 Previous studies have shown that NMD efficiency varies between different murine tissues (16). In
131 order to investigate tissue specific NMD variation, we have analysed *CHM* and *UPFI* expression in
132 fibroblasts and iPSC-derived RPE from two unrelated patients; (i) p.(Y42*) and (ii) p.(K258*). *CHM*
133 transcript levels in fibroblasts and iPSC-derived RPE for p.(Y42*) were 101 and 92% relative to an
134 age-matched healthy control and for p.(K258*) were 22.8 and 22.6%, respectively (Figure 3A). *UPFI*
135 transcript levels for p.(Y42*) were 142 and 45% and for p.(K258*) were 52.9 and 83.7%, respectively
136 (Figure 3B). Our results show that the *CHM* transcript levels in both cell types are similar for each
137 patient, however *UPFI* expression varied considerably amongst the different tissues. *CHM* mRNA
138 transcripts in p.(Y42*) are present at wild type levels, indicating that this transcript is escaping NMD.

139

140 **NMD inhibition increases *CHM* mRNA expression in fibroblasts**

141 The effect of caffeine on *CHM* expression was tested in three independent and unrelated patient
142 fibroblast cell lines, two with a p.(R270*) mutation and one with a p.(S190*) mutation. *CHM*
143 transcript levels in the two p.(R270*) patients were $19.3 \pm 3.9\%$ and $24.6 \pm 2.3\%$, and for p.(S190*)
144 was $22.3 \pm 2.1\%$. Overall, mean untreated *CHM* expression was $22.1 \pm 1.5\%$ (Figure 4A). Treatment
145 with 10 mM caffeine for four hours increased *CHM* transcript levels in all cell lines, to a mean $155 \pm$
146 44% of wild type levels, a 7-fold increase ($p < 0.05$) (Figure 4A). This confirms that active NMD is
147 inhibited, leading to rescue of PTC-containing transcripts.

148 To assess whether caffeine intake influenced whole blood *CHM* mRNA transcript levels, the average
149 daily caffeine consumption from the FFQ was determined for each *CHM* patient. There was no

150 significant difference in daily caffeine consumption between the CHM group (185.4 ± 28.9 mg/day)
151 and the age-matched controls (177.1 ± 28.9 mg/day). The average caffeine intake for patients used in
152 this study (excluding P1, who does not have an NMD-sensitive *CHM* variant) was 310.8 ± 40 mg/day.
153 There was no sign of correlation between patient caffeine consumption and *CHM* mRNA expression
154 in blood ($r= 0.58$; $p=0.18$) (Figure 4B).

155 **Discussion**

156

157 In this study, we have shown that patients with nonsense mutations in the *CHM* gene have 2.8-fold
158 lower levels of *CHM* transcripts compared to controls, indicating that the transcripts are subject to
159 degradation by NMD, but also a proportion of transcripts are escaping destruction. All patient
160 mutations are positioned at least 55 nucleotides upstream of the final exon-exon junction, and
161 therefore likely substrates of NMD. A wide variation in *CHM* expression was observed amongst
162 patients, which did not correlate with genotype, suggesting other factors may be responsible for NMD
163 efficiency. *UPFI* expression, a key NMD facilitator, was also highly variable with no correlation
164 found with *CHM* transcript levels. Linde *et al.* (2007) found NMD efficiency to be variable between
165 different cell types transfected with the same PTC containing genes, suggesting NMD efficiency to be
166 an inherent characteristic of the cell (17). However, in this study similar levels of *CHM* transcripts
167 were found between two different tissue-specific cell types in two unrelated patients. For this to be a
168 useful patient screening tool for potential response to nonsense suppression, further validation with a
169 greater number of tissues from more patients would be beneficial. In contrast, corresponding *UPFI*
170 transcript levels did vary between different cell types. This is consistent with the study by Zetoune *et*
171 *al.* (2008) (16), which showed NMD efficiency varies between different murine tissues and does not
172 correlate with *UPFI* expression or expression of any other genes encoding proteins involved in NMD.

173

174 Our cohort of patients did not show a correlation between disease severity and mRNA expression,
175 although investigation in a larger patient cohort would increase sensitivity. The role of NMD in the
176 regulation of normal gene expression is becoming more apparent. Investigation in non-disease
177 individuals may be valuable to elucidate the causes of variation in NMD efficiency.

178

179 In patient 1, [P1; p.(Y42*)], *CHM* mRNA levels are comparable to wild type levels in all cell types,
180 indicating that this transcript is escaping NMD. As this mutation is present near the start of the coding

181 sequence, the AUG-proximity effect may be in play here. In a study of 10,000 human tumours,
182 Lindeboom et al. (2016) found that NMD efficiency is significantly reduced in transcripts with PTCs
183 located within the first 200 nucleotides of the start codon(18). In P1, the PTC is located 126
184 nucleotides from the start codon. An AUG-proximal PTC transcript can evade NMD and trigger
185 translation re-initiation at a downstream codon. Pereira *et al.*, (2015) showed the boundary for
186 translation re-initiation in the *β-globin* mRNA is between codons 23 and 25(4). In the *CHM* transcript,
187 the next AUG is present at codon 149, which is unlikely to trigger translation re-initiation. However,
188 NMD efficiency is still lower in AUG-proximal PTC transcripts, even in the absence of a downstream
189 start codon. An alternative mechanism suggests that the transcript is stabilised by interaction of
190 cytoplasmic poly(A) binding protein 1 (PABPC1) and the termination complex. In the short open
191 reading frame of an AUG-proximal PTC transcript, PABPC1 interacting with eukaryotic initiation
192 factor 4G (eIF4G), is brought into close proximity with the termination complex at the PTC, leading to
193 an effective termination event, thereby suppressing NMD(19).

194

195 Linde *et al.* (2007) showed in a group of cystic fibrosis patients with the same p.(W1282*) mutation,
196 patients had varying levels of baseline *CFTR* transcripts, and those with higher levels responded better
197 to the nonsense suppression drug gentamicin(10). A number of other studies have shown that response
198 to nonsense suppression drugs is highly variable (10, 20, 21). We have previously shown that
199 treatment with ataluren restores prenylation activity in *CHM*^{Y42X} fibroblasts (8). However, in the study
200 by Torriano *et al.* (2018), no significant rescue was observed in *CHM*^{K258X} fibroblasts and iPSC-
201 derived RPE, which had lower *CHM* transcript levels (~20%) (9). In preparation for a phase 2 clinical
202 trial with ataluren for CHM, levels of baseline mRNA may provide a prognostic indicator of response
203 to treatment. Patients with lower *CHM* transcript levels may benefit from NMD inhibition to increase
204 baseline levels, allowing for more effective read-through. Treatment with caffeine restored *CHM*
205 mRNA expression to wildtype levels in treated cells. Further clinical studies assessing the direct effect
206 of caffeine on NMD and resultant *CHM* mRNA levels following consumption would provide further
207 evidence of therapeutic benefit. However, caution would be required due to the widespread side

208 effects on the body and interactions with many other pathways, and so potentially local delivery
209 would be more applicable. Keeling *et al.* (2013) showed in the mucopolysaccharidosis I-Hurler (MPS
210 I-H) mouse model, co-administration of the NMD specific inhibitor, NMDI-1, together with
211 gentamicin increased enzyme activity compared to gentamicin alone (14). Recently, an analogue of
212 NMDI-1 called VG1 has also been developed, using a more efficient process (22). The FDA-
213 approved drug amlexanox, has been shown to have a dual function by inhibiting NMD and promoting
214 synthesis of full length protein through nonsense suppression (23).

215

216 Together, our results show that NMD efficiencies are highly variable in CHM patients, with no
217 correlation with genotype or phenotype. Levels of transcripts did not vary between tissues, hence,
218 measuring baseline mRNA levels in patients with nonsense mutations, if accessible, may act to guide
219 choice of nonsense suppression therapy with or without NMD inhibitor adjuncts.

220

221

222 **Materials and Methods**

223

224 **Clinical methods**

225 The study protocol adhered to the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki and received approval from the
226 NRES Committee London Ethics Committee (REC12/LO/0489) and (REC12/LO/0141). Written,
227 informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their inclusion in this study.

228

229 Clinical data was collected from nine male subjects confirmed to have pathogenic variants in the
230 *CHM* gene, (Table 1) including age, ethnicity and visual acuity. All retinal imaging was collected as
231 part of an on-going natural history study of CHM patients for future gene augmentation therapies
232 tailored to nonsense-mediated disease. Previous work has shown delineation of the central hyper-
233 autofluorescent retinal island area to be the most repeatable metric to measure disease state (24).
234 Images were acquired using short wavelength (488 nm) autofluorescence on the Heidelberg Spectralis
235 confocal scanning laser ophthalmoscope (Heidelberg Engineering, Heidelberg, Germany), and area
236 was measured using the vendor software (Heidelberg Eye Explorer Region Finder Version 2.4.3.0).

237

238 **Blood collection and RNA extraction**

239 Whole blood (2.5 ml) was collected from the 9 CHM affected male patients and 6 age and sex-
240 matched healthy controls (Table 1) in PAXgene Blood RNA tubes (QIAGEN). These were incubated
241 at room temperature for 2 hours to lyse blood cells. Tubes were then transferred to -20 °C until frozen
242 and subsequently stored at -80 °C, until further processing. Prior to RNA extraction, tubes were
243 thawed to room temperature. RNA from blood was extracted using the PAXgene Blood RNA kit
244 (QIAGEN), according to the manufacturer's instructions.

245

246 **Fibroblast cell culture and dosing**

247 Three patient and one healthy control fibroblast lines were obtained from Coriell Biorepository or
248 cultured from skin biopsies, as previously described (8) (cell line details are listed in Table 2). Cells
249 were maintained in Dulbecco's Modified Eagles Medium (DMEM), high glucose, supplemented with
250 15% FBS and Penicillin/Streptomycin (ThermoFisher). For cell collection, a T75 confluent flask was
251 pelleted at 200 g for 5 mins, the pellet was washed in PBS at 200 g for 5 mins at 4°C twice. All liquid
252 was removed and the pellet snap frozen in an alcohol/dry ice bath, and stored at -80°C until further
253 processing. RNA extraction from cells was carried out using RNeasy Mini Kit (QIAGEN), following
254 the manufacturer's instructions. For dosing experiments, fibroblasts were plated in 24 well plates at a
255 seeding density of 100,000 cells per well for 48 hours. Media was replaced with antibiotic free growth
256 medium, containing 10 mM caffeine (Sigma). Cells were incubated at 37°C for 4 hours. RNA
257 extraction was carried out using RNeasy Mini Kit (QIAGEN), following the manufacturer's
258 instructions. Three independent experiments were performed.

259

260 **Fibroblast reprogramming to iPSCs and generation of RPE**

261 Wild type and *CHM*^{Y42X} fibroblasts were reprogrammed to iPSCs, using integration free episomal
262 vectors, and subsequently differentiated into RPE, as previously described (25). RT-PCR of RPE-
263 specific marker genes and immunohistochemistry are shown in supplementary data (Figure S1). RNA
264 extraction was carried out using RNeasy Mini Kit (QIAGEN), following manufacturer's instructions.
265 *CHM*^{K258X} fibroblasts and iPSC-derived RPE, as well as the corresponding RNA, were generated as
266 previously described (9).

267

268 **RT-qPCR**

269 cDNA was synthesised from 500 ng of RNA using the Superscript III First Strand cDNA synthesis kit
270 (Invitrogen), according to the manufacturer's instructions. Transcript levels were analysed using

271 SYBR Green MasterMix (ThermoFisher) on a StepOne Real-Time PCR system (Applied
272 Biosystems), under standard cycling conditions. All samples were assayed in triplicate. Primers used
273 for RT-qPCR are listed in Table 3. *GAPDH* was used as a reference gene. As the forward *CHM*
274 primer overlapped the p.(Y42*) mutation in P1, the 5' – CGTCAGACATCAGCAGGAGC (forward)
275 and 5' – GGATTTGGTGGAGGGGACA (reverse) primers were used to analyse *CHM* transcript
276 levels in P1 blood, fibroblasts and iPSC-derived RPE.

277

278 **Patient caffeine consumption**

279 Twenty-five *CHM* male patients and 25 age and gender matched control subjects were asked to
280 complete a food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) on their average consumption of various foods and
281 drinks over the last twelve months. The validated FFQ comprised a list of 147 food items and
282 participants were asked to indicate their usual consumption from one of nine frequency categories
283 ranging from “never or less than once per month” to “six or more times per day.”(26). Individuals
284 would have been excluded if their answers to >10 items had been left blank, but this was not true for
285 any of the participants. The amount of caffeine in food and drink items was calculated using a
286 database with composition values obtained from the USDA Food Composition Databases (Accessed
287 October 2018). Specifically, using data derived from the USDA National Nutrient Database for
288 Standard Reference Legacy Release (April 2018) and USDA Branded Food Products Database to
289 enable average caffeine consumption (mg/day) to be calculated for each patient.

290

291 **Statistical Analysis**

292 All data are expressed as mean \pm SEM. Differences between control and patient groups were analysed
293 by Mann-Whitney test. Relationship between *CHM* and *UPFI* transcript levels were analysed by
294 Pearson's correlation. To assess the relationship between *CHM* mRNA expression and clinical
295 phenotype, multivariate regression analysis for subject age, FAF area and mRNA level was
296 undertaken (JMP13, Marlow, Buckinghamshire, UK). The effect of caffeine treatment on cells was

297 analysed by Kruskal-Wallis analysis, followed by Dunn's multiple comparisons test. Correlation
298 between caffeine consumption and *CHM* mRNA levels was analysed by Pearson's correlation. A p-
299 value of <0.05 was considered significant.

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306

307 Conflict of Interest Statement

308 The authors declare no competing interests.

309

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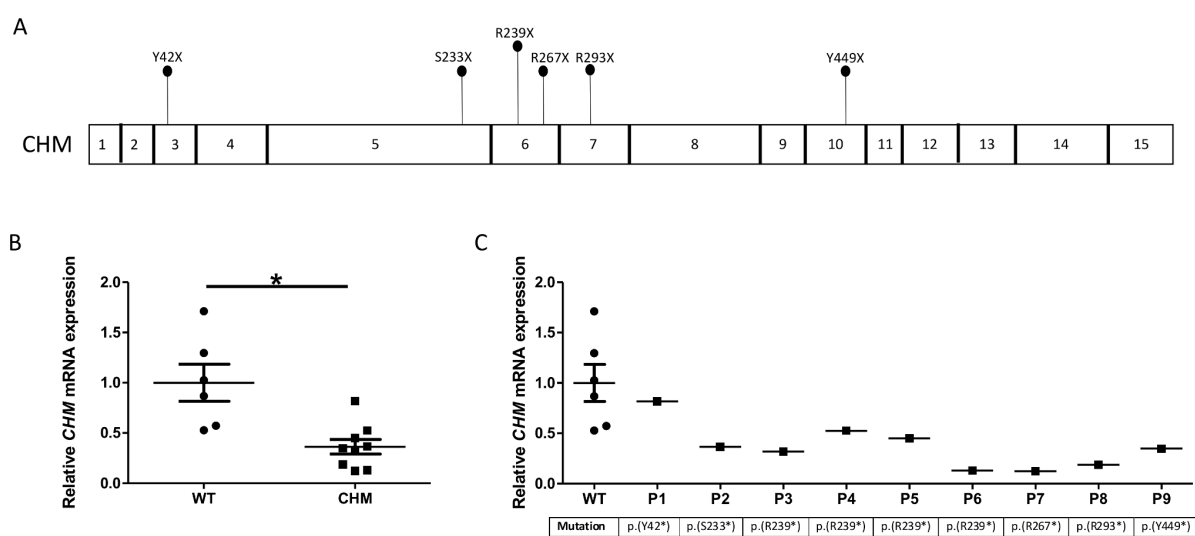
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390 **Figure legends**

391 **Figure 1: *CHM* mRNA expression is significantly reduced in patients. (A)** Schematic of the *CHM*
 392 gene. Patient mutations used in this study are labelled. **(B)** Relative *CHM* mRNA expression in
 393 patients analysed by RT-qPCR. Patients have a 2.8-fold lower expression compared to control
 394 (* $p=0.008$). **(C)** Relative *CHM* mRNA expression in patients, ordered by mutation position. No
 395 correlation was found between *CHM* mRNA expression and genotype. Data expressed as mean \pm
 396 SEM.



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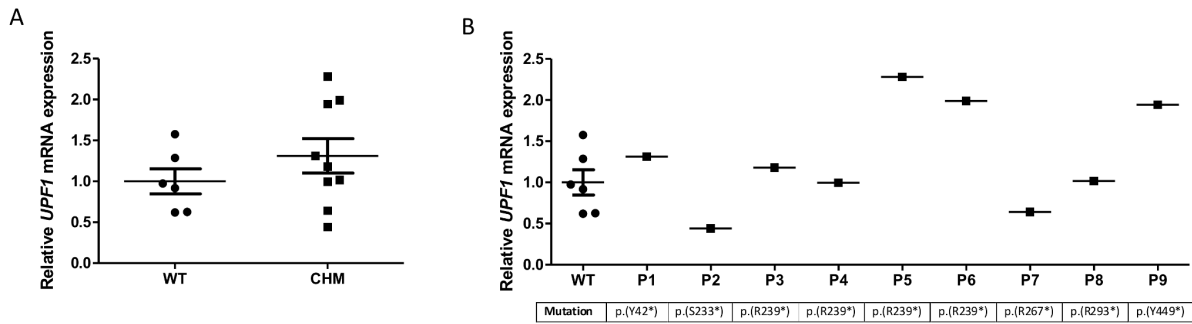
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407 **Figure 2: *UPF1* mRNA expression is widely variable amongst patients (A)** Relative *UPF1* mRNA
 408 expression in patients analysed by RT-qPCR. No significant difference was found between patients
 409 and controls. **(B)** Relative *UPF1* mRNA expression in patients, ordered by mutation position. No
 410 correlation was found between *UPF1* mRNA expression and genotype. Data expressed as mean \pm
 411 SEM.



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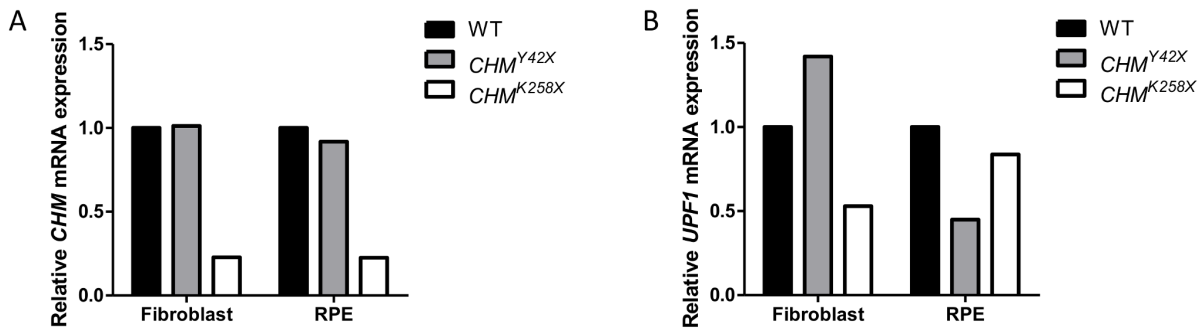
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424 **Figure 3: No variation in NMD efficiency was found between cell types.** Relative (A) *CHM* and
425 (B) *UPF1* mRNA expression in *CHM*^{Y42X} (grey) and *CHM*^{K258X} (white) fibroblasts and iPSC-derived
426 RPE.



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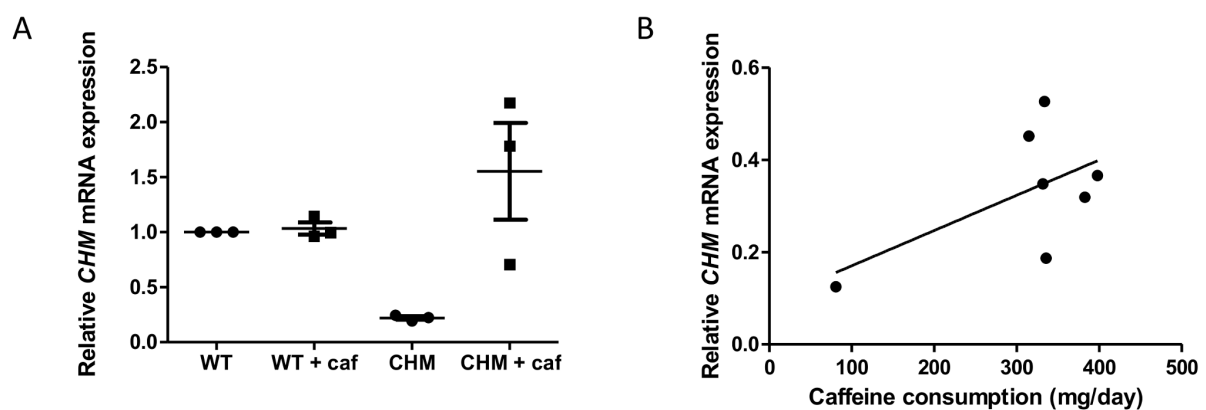
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441 **Figure 4: NMD inhibition with caffeine increases *CHM* mRNA expression.** (A) Effect of caffeine
 442 on *CHM* mRNA expression in three unrelated patient fibroblasts (p.[R270*], p.[R270*] and
 443 p.[S190*]). Cells were treated with 10mM caffeine for 4 hrs and mRNA expression analysed by RT-
 444 qPCR. Caffeine significantly increased *CHM* mRNA expression, compared to untreated cells (p
 445 <0.05). Data expressed as mean \pm SEM (n=3). (B) Patients were asked to complete a food
 446 questionnaire, and the average daily caffeine intake was calculated. Correlation between caffeine
 447 consumption and relative *CHM* mRNA expression was analysed by Pearson's correlation (r=0.58).
 448 No significant correlation between patient caffeine consumption and *CHM* mRNA expression
 449 (p=0.18) was observed.



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452 **Tables**

Patient	Age	cDNA change	Amino acid change	Stop Introduced	Exon	FAF Area (mm ²)
P1	28	c.126 C>G	p.(Y42*)	UAG	3	1.77
P2	50	c.698 C>G	p.(S233*)	UGA	5	0.41
P3	28	c.715 C>T	p.(R239*)	UGA	6	22.32
P4	50	c.715 C>T	p.(R239*)	UGA	6	19.71
P5	62	c.715 C>T	p.(R239*)	UGA	6	19.62
P6	72	c.715 C>T	p.(R239*)	UGA	6	2.66

P7	49	c.799 C>T	p.(R267*)	UGA	6	18.55
P8	43	c.877 C>T	p.(R293*)	UGA	7	10.98
P9	58	c.1347 C>G	p.(Y449*)	UAG	10	6.27

453 **Table 1: Choroideremia male affected patients enrolled in this study.**

454 Fundus autofluorescence (FAF) analysed using the Heidelberg area tool, Heidelberg Engineering.

455 Variants correspond to RefSeq NM_000390.4

456

Age	cDNA change	Amino acid change	Stop Introduced	Exon	Coriell ID
43		Healthy control			GM23963
48	c.569 C>G	p.(S190*)	UGA	5	GM25421
20	c.808 C>T	p.(R270*)	UGA	6	GM25383
61	c.808 C>T	p.(R270*)	UGA	6	GM25386
28	c.126 C>G	p.(Y42*)	UAG	3	Patient skin biopsy
10	c.772 A>T	p.(K258*)	UAA	6	Torriano <i>et al.</i> 2018

457 **Table 2: Fibroblast cell lines used in this study.** Cells were obtained from Coriell Institute for

458 Medical Research or cultured from patient skin biopsies.

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<i>CHM</i> forward	5' - AGAAGCTACTATGGAGGAAAC
<i>CHM</i> reverse	5' - TTCCTGGTATTCCTTTAGCC
<i>UPF1</i> forward	5' - GCTGTCCCAGTATTAAGG
<i>UPF1</i> reverse	5' - CAGTGGTGCTTCAGTTTATG
<i>GAPDH</i> forward	5' - CTTTTCGCGTCGCCAG
<i>GAPDH</i> reverse	5' - TTGATGGCAACAATATCCAC

460 **Table 3: RT-qPCR primer sequences**

461 **Abbreviations**

462 CHM, Choroideremia

463 PTC, Premature termination codon

464 NMD, Nonsense mediated decay

465 eRFs, Eukaryotic release factors

466 iPSC, Induced pluripotent stem cell

467 RPE, Retinal pigment epithelium

468 CFTR, Cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator gene

469 FAF, Fundus autofluorescence

470 PABPC1, Poly(A) binding protein 1

471 eIF4G, Eukaryotic initiation factor 4G

472 MPS I-H, Mucopolysaccharidosis I-Hurler

473 SD-OCT, Spectral domain optical coherence tomography

474 DMEM, Dulbecco's Modified Eagles Medium

475 FFQ, Food frequency questionnaire