

Jilted fruit flies get drunk: study

NEUROLOGY • Frustrated male fruit flies, whose sexual advances are rejected by females, turn to alcohol to drown their sorrows, a study published Thursday revealed.

Scientists at the University of California, San Francisco, discovered that rejected male flies have a tiny neuropeptide F molecule in their brain that pushes them to drink far more than their sexually satisfied counterparts.

The levels of the molecule were higher in sexually satisfied males than in those who got no sex, leading scientists to speculate that their work could shed light on brain mechanisms behind addiction.

A similar human molecule —

neuropeptide Y — may also link social triggers to behaviours such as heavy drinking and drug abuse, according to the study published in *Science* journal. "If neuropeptide Y turns out to be the transducer between the state of the psyche and the drive to abuse alcohol and drugs, one could develop therapies to inhibit neuropeptide Y receptors," said lead researcher Ulrike Heberlein, a professor of anatomy and neurology at UCSF.

She said clinical trials were underway to determine whether neuropeptide Y can alleviate anxiety and other mood disorders as well as obesity.

—Agence France-Presse