

1 **Title: Alpha synuclein aggregation drives ferroptosis: an interplay of iron, calcium and lipid**  
2 **peroxidation**

3 **Plamena R. Angelova<sup>1#</sup>, Minee L. Choi<sup>1,8#</sup>, Alexey V. Berezhnov<sup>2,11</sup>, Mathew H. Horrocks<sup>7</sup>, Craig D.**  
4 **Hughes<sup>7</sup>, Suman De<sup>7,10</sup>, Margarida Rodrigues<sup>7,10</sup>, Ratsuda Yapom<sup>3</sup>, Daniel Little<sup>4,12</sup>, Karamjit S.**  
5 **Dolt<sup>3</sup>, Tilo Kunath<sup>3</sup>, Michael J. Devine<sup>4</sup>, Paul Gissen<sup>4,12</sup>, Mikhail S. Shchepinov<sup>9</sup>, Sergiy Sylantyev<sup>1,5</sup>,**  
6 **Evgeny V. Pavlov<sup>6</sup>, David Klenerman<sup>7,10</sup>, Andrey Y. Abramov<sup>1,11\*</sup>, Sonia Gandhi<sup>1,8\*</sup>**

7 *<sup>1</sup>UCL Institute of Neurology, Queen Square, London WC1N 3BG, UK; <sup>2</sup>Institute of Cell Biophysics, Russian*  
8 *Academy of Sciences, Pushchino, 142290, Russia; <sup>3</sup>MRC Centre for Regenerative Medicine, The University*  
9 *of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK; <sup>4</sup>MRC Laboratory for Molecular Cell Biology, University College London,*  
10 *Gower Street, London, UK; <sup>5</sup>Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen, Ashgrove Rd West, Aberdeen AB25*  
11 *2ZD, UK; <sup>6</sup>College of Dentistry, New York University, New York, USA; <sup>7</sup> Department of Chemistry,*  
12 *University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK; <sup>8</sup>The Francis Crick Institute, London, UK; <sup>9</sup> Retrotope Inc., Los*  
13 *Altos, California 94022, United States; <sup>10</sup>Dementia Research institute at University of Cambridge,*  
14 *Cambridge, UK; <sup>11</sup>Orel State University, Orel, Russia, <sup>12</sup>NIHR Great Ormond Street Hospital Biomedical*  
15 *Research Centre, London, UK.*

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17 # Equally contributing author.

18 \* Joint senior authors.

19 To whom correspondence should be addressed: Andrey Y. Abramov or Sonia Gandhi, UCL Institute of  
20 Neurology, Queen Square House, Queen Square, London, UK, WC1N 3BG,

21 Tel.: (+44) 203 448 4062; E-mail: [a.abramov@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.abramov@ucl.ac.uk) ; [sonia.gandhi@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:sonia.gandhi@ucl.ac.uk)

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24 *derived neurons, electrophysiology*

25

26 **Abstract**

27 Protein aggregation and abnormal lipid homeostasis are both implicated in neurodegeneration through  
28 unknown mechanisms. Here we demonstrate that aggregate-membrane interaction is critical to induce a

1 form of cell death called ferroptosis. Importantly the aggregate-membrane interaction that drives ferroptosis  
2 depends both on the conformational structure of the aggregate, as well as the oxidation state of the lipid  
3 membrane. We generated human stem cell derived models of synucleinopathy, characterised by the  
4 intracellular formation of  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregates that bind to membranes. In human iPSC derived neurons  
5 with SNCA triplication, physiological concentrations of glutamate and dopamine induce abnormal calcium  
6 signalling due to the incorporation of excess  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers into membranes, leading to altered  
7 membrane conductance and abnormal calcium influx.  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers further induce lipid  
8 peroxidation. Targeted inhibition of lipid peroxidation prevents the aggregate-membrane interaction,  
9 abolishes aberrant calcium fluxes, and restores physiological calcium signalling. Inhibition of lipid  
10 peroxidation, and reduction of iron dependent accumulation of free radicals, further prevents oligomer  
11 induced toxicity in human neurons. In summary, we report that peroxidation of polyunsaturated fatty acids  
12 underlies the incorporation of  $\beta$ -sheet rich aggregates into the membranes, and that additionally induces  
13 neuronal death. This suggests a role for ferroptosis in Parkinson's disease, and highlights a new mechanism  
14 by which lipid peroxidation causes cell death.

15

## 16 **Introduction**

17 Synucleinopathies are neurodegenerative diseases that are characterised by the abnormal aggregation of the  
18 protein  $\alpha$ -synuclein, and include Dementia with Lewy Body Disease, Parkinson's Disease (PD) and  
19 Multiple System Atrophy (MSA) (1). Within this group of diseases, it is evident that  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
20 aggregation, or Lewy Body pathology, occurs in diverse cell groups including the enteric nervous system,  
21 midbrain dopaminergic neurons, and cortical neurons (2-5). Genetic evidence shows that alteration in the  
22 concentration or structure of  $\alpha$ -synuclein causes the synucleinopathies, in particular PD. Missense  
23 mutations, and duplications or triplications of the SNCA gene, lead to autosomal dominant PD (6-9) that is  
24 indistinguishable from sporadic PD, apart from early onset and a more aggressive course. Variations in the  
25 SNCA gene that lead to increased  $\alpha$ -synuclein expression represent a genetic risk factor for sporadic PD  
26 (10).

27 Compelling pathological and genetic data defines  $\alpha$ -synuclein as the cause of synucleinopathies, and raises  
28 the question of how aggregation induces cellular dysfunction and death. During aggregation,  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
29 transitions from an intrinsically disordered monomeric protein to form small soluble oligomers with  
30 increasing  $\beta$ -sheet content, followed by protofibrils and insoluble fibrils. The soluble intermediate  
31 oligomeric species of  $\alpha$ -synuclein may be 'toxic' to cells, and the toxicity of certain oligomers of  $\alpha$ -  
32 synuclein may be attributed to specific structural characteristics that confer damaging properties (11). It is

1 well established that  $\alpha$ -synuclein interacts with lipids in its monomeric form, where it may regulate synaptic  
2 vesicle trafficking (12). Importantly, oligomers of high  $\beta$ -sheet content and exposed hydrophobic residues  
3 also interact with lipids, and disrupt or damage membrane structure, resulting in aberrant ion fluxes (13-  
4 15). We have also demonstrated that oligomeric species can generate reactive oxygen species within the  
5 cell, and this leads to the oxidation of lipids in the plasmalemmal and mitochondrial membranes, as well as  
6 oxidation of mitochondrial proteins (13, 16, 17). Oligomer induced oxidation events open the mitochondrial  
7 permeability transition pore, leading to apoptosis (18). However, other forms of cell death also exist, and  
8 death by ‘ferroptosis’ has emerged to describe cell toxicity driven by the iron dependent accumulation of  
9 lipid peroxides (19).

10 In this study, we utilized two human stem cell derived models of synucleinopathy to investigate how protein  
11 aggregation, calcium signalling, and redox biology interact to induce toxicity. We investigate (i) the effect  
12 of cellular uptake of exogenously applied recombinant oligomers, in which we can control the structure and  
13 concentration of the species and (ii) the effect of longer term endogenous increased expression of  $\alpha$ -  
14 synuclein from SNCA mutations, and therefore the consequence of endogenously generated oligomeric  
15 species.  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregation occurs in human neurons, and these aggregates deregulate physiological  
16 calcium signalling, an effect dependent on the interaction between aggregates and membranes. Importantly  
17 modulation of the oxidation state of the lipids changes the membrane -  $\alpha$ -synuclein interactions, and cell  
18 viability, highlighting the cell death pathway, ferroptosis, in these models.

19

## 20 **Material and Methods**

### 21 *Human stem cell derived models*

#### 22 *Human Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell (iPSC) culture*

23 iPSCs were derived from donors who had given signed informed consent for derivation of iPSC lines from  
24 skin biopsies as part of the EU IMI-funded programme StemBANCC. All experimental protocols had  
25 approval from the London - Hampstead Research Ethics Committee (ref: 13/LO/0171, IRAS project ID:  
26 100318) and R&D approval from the University College London Great Ormond Street Institute of Child  
27 Health and Great Ormond Street Hospital Joint Research Office.

28 iPSC-derived cortical neurons from 3 SNCA triplication (SNCA x3) clones and 3 control clones were  
29 generated using standard protocols, and all experiments were performed on a minimum of 3 independent  
30 inductions. Experiments were repeated using the SNCA x3 clones, and an isogenic clone generated from  
31 the same patient. iPSCs were generated from a patient with early onset autosomal dominant PD due to a  
32 triplication of the SNCA gene (encoding  $\alpha$ -synuclein) using viral transduction of OCT4, SOX2, KLF4 and

1 c-MYC (20). SNCA x3 results in four copies of the SNCA gene, and a doubling of SNCA mRNA and  $\alpha$ -  
2 synuclein protein. CRISPR/Cas 9 nickase technology was employed to remove 2 SNCA alleles to restore  
3 the SNCA gene dosage to 2 copies, whilst retaining the rest of the triplication locus (that is, the isogenic  
4 control, (21). The isogenic cell line was generated from a SNCA x3 iPSC clone by CRISPR/Cas9 double  
5 nickase gene editing to knockout 2 SNCA alleles, reducing the allele dosage from 4 (in the triplication cells)  
6 to 2 (normal). This method retains the rest of the triplication locus intact, and therefore provides the ideal  
7 control for the effects of SNCA x3 alone.

8 iPSCs were cultured on Geltrex (Thermo-Fisher) in Essential 8 medium (Thermo-Fisher) and passaged  
9 using 0.5 mM EDTA (Thermo-Fisher). Neural induction was performed through dual SMAD inhibition  
10 using SB431542 (10  $\mu$ M, Tocris) and Dorsomorphin dihydrochloride (1  $\mu$ M Tocris) within N2B27 media  
11 - DMEM;F12+ glutamax, Neurobasal, B28, N2, Glutamax, Insulin, Non Essential Amino Acids, 2-  
12 mercaptoethanol, Pen/strep- (modified from (22)). Cells were first passaged with Dispase (Thermo-Fisher,  
13 1:2) at day 10 upon first appearance of the neuroepithelial sheet. Upon appearance of neural rosettes at day  
14 20 - 21, cells are passaged again with Dispase. Cells were passaged approximately 3 more times before  
15 being used at day 70 - 90. All lines were mycoplasma tested (all negative) and performed with STR profiling  
16 (all matched) by the Francis Crick Institute Cell service team.

#### 17 *Human Embryonic Stem cells (ES) culture*

18 The hESC line was kindly provided by Dr. David Hay (University of Edinburgh), upon MRC Steering  
19 Committee approval (ref. no. SCSC11-60). The line was established at the Centre for Stem Cell Biology  
20 (University of Sheffield) under a license from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority, and has  
21 been validated to show the standard hESC characteristics including a normal karyotype. Briefly, pCAG-  
22 SNCA-IRES-Venus or the control pCAG-IV were transfected into hES cells followed by antibiotic  
23 selection to allow the generation of clones with stable expression of SNCA. Clones exhibiting normal  
24 morphology, growth and differentiation behaviour were selected and characterised for SNCA expression,  
25 and two clones with near normal levels of SNCA expression (here designated control) and high levels of  
26 SNCA expression (designated as hES OE syn) were utilized for further studies.

27 For neural induction, hES cells were dissociated into single cells with Accutase (Gibco, Cat. no. A11105-  
28 01) and plated on a Matrigel-coated 6-well plate in mTeSR1 medium. Cells were fed daily until they reached  
29 90% confluency or above. Neural induction started at day 0, when mTeSR1 was replaced with hESC  
30 medium lacking FGF2, supplemented with 10  $\mu$ M SB431542 (Tocris) and 100 nM LDN-193189  
31 (Stemgent). Cells were fed daily with this medium until day 4. From day 5 to day 11, SB431542 was  
32 withdrawn and cells were fed every other day with a mixture of hESC medium and N2B27, which was

1 gradually added into culture medium from 25%, 50%, 75% and 100% at day 5, day 7, day 9 and day 11,  
2 respectively. pCAG-SNCA-IRES-Venus or the control pCAG-IV were transfected into hES cells followed  
3 by antibiotic selection to allow the generation of clones with stable expression of SNCA. Clones exhibiting  
4 normal morphology, growth and differentiation behaviour were selected and characterised for SNCA  
5 expression, and two clones with near normal levels of SNCA expression (here designated control) and high  
6 levels of SNCA expression (designated as hES OE syn) were utilized for further studies.

7

### 8 ***Aggregation of $\alpha$ -synuclein***

9 Wild-type  $\alpha$ -synuclein and A90C variant were purified from *Escherichia coli*. as previously described by  
10 Hoyer *et al* (23). All  $\alpha$ S aggregations (using labelled or unlabelled protein) were conducted in LoBind  
11 microcentrifuge tubes (Eppendorf) to limit surface adsorption.

12 For the aggregation reactions of unlabeled recombinant  $\alpha$ -synuclein, a 70  $\mu$ M solution of wild-type  $\alpha$ -  
13 synuclein in 25 mM Tris buffer with 100 mM NaCl pH 7.4 (supplemented with 0.01% NaN<sub>3</sub> to prevent  
14 bacterial growth during aggregation) was incubated at 37°C with constant agitation at 200rpm (New  
15 Brunswick Scientific Innova 43), during which time aliquots were taken.

16 For the aggregation reactions of labelled  $\alpha$ -synuclein, the A90C variant of monomeric  $\alpha$ S was labeled with  
17 maleimide-linked Alexa Fluor 488 (AF488) or Alexa Fluor 594 (AF594) (Life Technologies) as described  
18 previously (16, 24). The excess dye was removed by passing the labeled protein through a P10 desalting  
19 column containing Sephadex G25 matrix (GE Healthcare, Waukesha, WI). After elution, protein  
20 concentration was determined using a nanodrop and the sample divided into aliquots, before being flash-  
21 frozen in liquid nitrogen and stored at -80 °C. Each aliquot was only thawed once prior to use. AF488-  
22 labelled and AF594-labelled monomeric  $\alpha$ S were diluted in Tris buffer (same composition as mentioned  
23 above) at a concentration of 70  $\mu$ M. For FRET experiments, AF488-labelled and AF594-labelled  
24 monomeric  $\alpha$ S were incubated together to a final concentration of 70  $\mu$ M. Similar to the aggregation of  
25 unlabeled  $\alpha$ S, the reaction was performed in the dark at 37 °C with constant agitation at 200 rpm (same  
26 incubator as above) and aliquots were withdrawn at specific time points.

27 Different time points of unlabelled  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregation reaction were characterized using a highly  
28 sensitive single-molecule method termed SAVE (Single Aggregate Visualisation by Enhancement)  
29 imaging, which uses single-molecule fluorescence microscopy to detect the benzothiazole salt thioflavin-T  
30 (ThT) see Sup Fig 1. Upon binding to  $\beta$ -sheet structures, ThT fluorescence increases allowing individual  
31 aggregated species to be detected. From 2 h onwards, the number of diffraction limited fluorescent puncta

1 increases, which represents the emergence of oligomers and at later time points (> 24 h), fibrils as long as  
2 5  $\mu\text{m}$  are observed. For this study, we used time point 0h (no aggregates), 8h (maximum number of  
3 oligomers without the presence of fibrils) and 24 h (16)(fibrils). The kinetics of labelled  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
4 reaction is different from the unlabelled and the time point that maximizes the number of oligomers is  
5 around 29h and fibrils appear after 72h.

6

7 ***Deuteration of PUFAs***

8 Deuteration of PUFAs, Deuterated Poly-Unsaturated Fatty Acids (D-PUFAs) were prepared as described  
9 previously (25) and used as free acids. Non-deuterated PUFAs were obtained from Sigma–Aldrich (99%;  
10 St. Louis, MO, USA). Cells were pre-incubated with 10  $\mu\text{M}$  D-PUFA in the culturing media for 48 hrs prior  
11 to experiment and washed with HBSS before experiments.

12

13 ***Live Imaging (Fluorescence Measurements)***

14 Fluorescent indicators (fura-2 AM, Dihydroethidium, C11-BODIPY, SYTOX Green) were used to measure  
15  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$ , reactive oxygen species (ROS), and lipid peroxidation, and cell death respectively. The fluorescent  
16 data was collected using a cooled camera device or a confocal microscope. For fluorescence measurements  
17 with cooled camera device, data were obtained on an epifluorescence inverted microscope equipped with a  
18 x 20 fluorite objective. For confocal microscopy, images were obtained using an either Zeiss 710 or 880  
19 (airy) vis CLSM equipped with a META detection system and a 40x oil immersion objective. Illumination  
20 intensity was kept to a minimum (at 0.1 - 0.2 % of laser output) to avoid phototoxicity and the pinhole set  
21 to give an optical slice of  $\sim 2 \mu\text{m}$ . All data presented were obtained from at least 3 coverslips and 2 - 3  
22 different induction.

23 For measurements of  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$ , cells were loaded for 30 min at room temperature with 5  $\mu\text{M}$  Fura-2 AM with  
24 0.005% pluronic acid in a HEPES-buffered salt solution (HBSS) composed of (mM): 156 NaCl, 3 KCl,  
25 2MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 1.25 KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 2 CaCl<sub>2</sub>, 10 Glucose and 10 HEPES; pH adjusted to 7.35 with NaOH.  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$   
26 was monitored in single cells using excitation light provided by a Xenon arc lamp, the beam passing through  
27 monochromator centred sequentially at 340 and 380 nm (Cairn Research, Kent, UK). Emitted fluorescence  
28 light was reflected through a 515 nm long-pass filter to a cooled CCD camera (Retiga, QImaging, Canada).  
29 All imaging data was collected and analysed using software from Andor (Belfast, UK). The Fura–2 data  
30 have not been calibrated in terms of  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_i$  because of the uncertainty arising from the use of different

1 calibration techniques. For Dihydroethidium (Het) we generated ratios of the oxidised form (ethidium)  
2 excited at 530 nm and measured using a 560 nm longpass filter and the reduced form with excitation at 380  
3 nm, measured between 415 - 470nm.

4 To assess lipid peroxidation, cells were loaded with C11-BODIPY (581/591, 2  $\mu$ M, Molecular Probes) in  
5 HEPES buffered HBSS for 20 min prior to imaging and then excited using the 488 and 565 nm laser and  
6 fluorescence measured from 505 to 550 nm and above 580 nm (409 objective) using a confocal microscopy.  
7 The intensely fluorescent C11-BODIPY 581/591 fluorophore is an intrinsically lipophilic dye which results  
8 in accumulation within membranes. Upon oxidation of the polyunsaturated butadienyl portion of the dye,  
9 there is a shift of the fluorescent emission peak from 590 nm to 510 nm, and it remains lipophilic, thus  
10 reflecting lipid peroxidation in membranes.

11 For SYTOX green (Molecular Probes), cells were loaded with SYTOX green in HEPES buffered HBSS  
12 for 15 min. High-throughput images were acquired using an Opera Phenix High-Content Screening System  
13 (PerkinElmer). SYTOX green staining was imaged by 488 nm and 405 nm for Hoechst staining nuclei.  
14 Total 17-22 fields of images were taken per wells. Then the percentage of cell death was quantified by the  
15 ratio between the number of Sytox green positive cells and the total number of Hoechst expressing cells per  
16 image using a Columbus Studio<sup>TM</sup> Cell Analysis Software.

17 To visualise cytoplasmic membrane, cells were washed with HBSS and incubated with either CellMask  
18 deep red Plasma membrane Stain (ThermoFisherScientific, 5 $\mu$ g/ml) for 5-10min or CellBrite<sup>TM</sup> Blue  
19 (Biotium, 5 $\mu$ M) for 30min in HBSS and live-cell imaging was performed.

20

### 21 *Measuring $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregate induced $Ca^{2+}$ influx*

22 To characterise aggregation in neurons derived from SNCA x3, lysates and media were collected from both  
23 control and SNCA x3. Cells were lysed mechanically without using a lysis buffer. The lysates and media  
24 were collected in an Eppendorf tube and centrifuged at 15000 rpm for 15 min. Supernatant was collected  
25 in a fresh Eppendorf tube and kept in -80 until use.

26 For the membrane permeabilization assay, vesicles are prepared as previously described (26). Using this  
27 assay, it has been previously shown  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers disrupt and permeabilise membranes (27, 28).  
28 Briefly, vesicles are synthesized using Phospholipids 16:0-18:1 PC and biotinylated lipids 18:1-12:0 Biotin  
29 PC (100:1) using freeze thaw method and mean diameter is 200 nm. Vesicles of oxidised lipid was made  
30 using oxPAPC (Oxidized 1-palmitoyl-2-arachidonoyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine) and 18:1-12:0 Biotin

1 PC. Each vesicle is filled with 100  $\mu$ M Cal-520 dye and immobilised in PLL-g-PEG coated plasma cleaned  
2 glass coverslips using biotin-neutravidin linkage. The surrounding of the vesicles was filled with  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$   
3 buffer. 50  $\mu$ L of sample was incubated with the vesicles for 15 minutes and  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  influx was quantitatively  
4 measured using a homebuilt Total Internal Reflection Fluorescence Microscope (TIRFM) based on an  
5 inverted Nikon Ti-2 microscope. 488 nm laser was focused back-focal plane of the 100X, 1.49NA oil  
6 immersion objective lens used to excite the Cal-520 dye. The fluorescence signal was collected by the same  
7 objective and magnified 1.5 times. Then the emission light was passed through a long pass filter (BLP01-  
8 488R-25) and a band pass filter (FF01-520/44-25) before imaged in EmCCD camera. To check if the  
9 aggregate present in SNCA x3 media and lysates are composed of  $\alpha$ -synuclein, we have used previously  
10 reported method to determine the composition of the aggregates (29, 30). Media was incubated with Anti-  
11 Alpha-synuclein (phospho S129) antibody (Abcam ab51253), for 30 min and then added to the coverslips  
12 containing dye filled vesicles. Statistical significance test was performed using two sample unpaired t-test.

13

## 14 ***Electrophysiology***

### 15 *Single-channel electrophysiology in living neurons*

16 Patch-clamp recordings of  $\alpha$ -synuclein channels overexpressed in iPSC-derived neurons were performed  
17 in perfusion solution containing: 124 mM NaCl, 3 mM KCl, 26 mM  $\text{NaHCO}_3$ , 1.25 mM  $\text{NaH}_2\text{PO}_4$ , 10 mM  
18 D-glucose, 2 mM  $\text{CaCl}_2$ , 2mM  $\text{MgCl}_2$ , bubbled with 95:5  $\text{O}_2/\text{CO}_2$  (pH 7.4). To isolate response of  $\alpha$ -  
19 synuclein channels we added to external solution 50  $\mu$ M D-APV, 10  $\mu$ M NBQX, 100  $\mu$ M picrotoxin and 1  
20  $\mu$ M strychnine. Outside-out patches were excised from cell soma with 5-6 MOhm borosilicate glass pipette  
21 and held at -70 mV membrane potential. Intrapipette solution contained 117.5 mM Cs-gluconate, 17.5 mM  
22 CsCl, 10 mM KOH-HEPES, 10 mM BAPTA, 8 mM NaCl, 5 mM QX-314, 2 mM Mg-ATP, 0.3 mM GTP.  
23 As a control, we performed recordings from outside-out patches pulled from iPSC-derived neurons received  
24 from healthy volunteers.

25 Recordings were performed at 33-35  $^{\circ}\text{C}$  using Multiclamp-700B amplifier, in whole-cell mode; signals  
26 were digitized at 10 kHz. Recording electrodes were pulled from the thick-wall borosilicate glass capillaries  
27 and fire-polished to 5-7 MOhm resistance.

28 In human stem cell derived neurons, to calculate and visualise amplitude characteristic for ion channel  
29 openings, we constructed all-points histograms with 0.1 pA bin, and fitted them with a double-Gaussian  
30 function:



$$F = \frac{p_1 e^{-\frac{(n-m_1)^2}{2\sigma_1^2}}}{\sigma_1 \sqrt{2\pi}} + \frac{p_2 e^{-\frac{(n-m_2)^2}{2\sigma_2^2}}}{\sigma_2 \sqrt{2\pi}},$$

where  $m_1$  and  $m_2$  are the mode values of Gaussians,  $\sigma_1$  and  $\sigma_2$  are the standard deviations of corresponding modes,  $n$  is the value of electrical current, and  $p_1$  and  $p_2$  are the fitting constants.

With this approach the mode value for the open state was fitted as 2.17 pA.

### *Channel activity in liposomes*

Giant liposomes were prepared as described previously (31). Briefly, liposomes were formed by sonication of lipid (type IV-S soybean L- $\alpha$ -phosphatidylcholine; Sigma-Aldrich) in water. Liposomes (600  $\mu$ g lipid) were mixed with 5 mM HEPES, pH 7.4 (50  $\mu$ l volume) and with protein sample (5  $\mu$ l), and dotted on a glass slide. Samples were dehydrated (3 h) and rehydrated overnight with 150 mM KCl, 5 mM HEPES, pH 7.4, at 4 C. Patch-clamp procedures and analysis used were described previously (18). Membrane patches were excised from liposomes after formation of a giga-seal using micropipettes with ~0.4-  $\mu$ m diameter tips and resistances of 10–20  $\Omega$ M at room temperature. Voltage clamp was performed with the excised configuration of the patch-clamp technique using an Elements eONE patch clamp amplifier in the inside-out mode. Voltages are reported as pipette potentials. Current traces were processed using pCLAMP software. Traces for figure and all points histograms were prepared using Origin 9.

### ***ELISA assay***

To measure the concentration of oligomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein, cell lysates were mechanically from CTRL and SNCA x3 neurons.  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomer was analysed using Human  $\alpha$ -synuclein, alpha (non A4 component of amyloid precursor) oligomer (SNCA oligomer) ELISA kit (CSB-E18033h, Genexon) and then normalized by total protein per well using Pierce BCA Protein Assay Kit (23225, ThermoFisherScientific).

### ***Aptamer staining***

Cells were permeabilized with 0.25 Triton X 100 and blocked with 10% Normal Goat Serum for 20 min followed by another 3 hrs with 0.1% Triton X -100 and 10% Normal Goat Serum. Then cells were incubated

1 overnight with 0.5uM ATTO 425 labelled Aptamer (32). Cells were washed three times with PBS and  
2 imaged.

3

#### 4 ***Immunohistochemistry***

5 Cells (cultured in ibidi chamber) were fixed in 4% paraformaldehyde and permeabilized with 0.2% Triton-  
6 100. 5% BSA was used to block non-specific binding. Cells were incubated with primary antibody for 1hr  
7 at room temperature and washed three times with 5% BSA. Cells were incubated with secondary antibody  
8 (see SFigure 1 for antibody lists) for 1hr at room temperature. Cells were imaged with PBS after three times  
9 wash. Hoechst was added in the second wash if required.

10

#### 11 ***Statistical analysis***

12 Statistical analysis (unpaired two sample t-test or one-way ANOVA, P value is set at 0.05) and curve fitting  
13 were performed using Origin 2018 (Microcal Software Inc., Northampton, MA) software. Results are  
14 expressed as means  $\pm$  standard error of the mean (S.E.M.). N = number of inductions and n= number of  
15 cells, if not stated otherwise. Sample sizes for experiments were selected to capture adequate technical  
16 variation (number of cells; numbers of fields of view; number of coverslips) and biological variation  
17 (numbers of independent inductions; numbers of clones/patient line). Variance within each group was  
18 estimated using a F-statistics (sum of squares). All experiments were repeated minimum three times. All  
19 experiments were performed in a count balance manner and data was collected and analysed without bias.

20

#### 21 **Results**

##### 22 ***Human iPSC derived neurons with increased $\alpha$ -synuclein exhibit abnormal calcium signalling.***

23 Differentiation of control iPSCs (control, or CTRL), SNCA triplication iPSCs (SNCA x3), and isogenic  
24 control iPSCs, into cortical neurons was performed. The SNCA x3 mutation is a gene triplication, leading  
25 to a doubling of  $\alpha$ -synuclein protein expression (20). We generated enriched populations of neurons from  
26 both control and SNCA x3 mutant lines, with a small proportion of glial-like cells (Figure 1 A, B).  
27 Immunocytochemistry ( $\alpha$ -synuclein Ab MJFR1, Abcam), demonstrated elevated  $\alpha$ -synuclein protein  
28 expression in SNCA x3 cells (SFigure 2 Aa & b).

1 We investigated whether physiological calcium responses are altered by increased expression of  $\alpha$ -  
2 synuclein. We stimulated iPSC-derived neurons with physiological concentrations of glutamate (5  $\mu$ M) and  
3 KCl (50 mM) which induces opening of potential-sensitive  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  channels that are specific for neurons. We  
4 then stimulated a calcium signal with 100  $\mu$ M ATP which induces activation of P2Y receptors (33). There  
5 is no significant difference in the proportion of cells responding to either glutamate (neurons) or ATP  
6 stimuli (glia-like) in CTRL, SNCA x3 and Iso-CTRL (Figure 1 Ca & b). Stimulation of neurons with 5 $\mu$ M  
7 glutamate induces a significantly higher signal in SNCA x3 cells compared to both isogenic control and  
8 healthy control cells (CTRL:  $0.65 \pm 0.04$ , n=96, SNCA x3:  $1.2 \pm 0.1$ , n=99;  $p < 0.001$ , Figure 1 Cc, Da & d).  
9 The physiological  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_c$  response to 50 mM KCl was also higher in SNCA x3 iPSC-derived neurons  
10 ( $0.29 \pm 0.01$ , n=101) when compared to control neurons ( $1.01 \pm 0.039$ , n=114;  $p < 0.001$ ; Figure 1 Db & d).  
11 Stimulation with 100  $\mu$ M ATP leads to an increase in  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_c$  in glial-like cells, but not in neurons. This  
12  $[\text{Ca}^{2+}]_c$  response was significantly lower in glial-like cells with SNCA x3 when compared to control cells  
13 ( $0.49 \pm 0.03$ , n=68 in CTRL;  $p < 0.001$ ; Figure 1 Dc & d). We also detected an impairment of intracellular  
14 calcium homeostasis in SNCA x3 showing re-distribution of  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  stores, and depletion of ER calcium, and  
15 increase in mitochondrial calcium (SFigure 3).

16 One of the major characteristics of mature neurons is their spontaneous calcium activity. Spontaneous  
17 calcium transients were observed in all iPSC-derived cortical neurons (Figure 1 Ea), with no significant  
18 difference in the amplitude of these transients (Figure 1 Eb) between CTRL and SNCA x3.

19

### 20 ***Increased expression of $\alpha$ -synuclein in a hES model demonstrates altered calcium signalling.***

21 To test the effect specifically of SNCA expression in neurons, we utilized a model of transgenic human stem  
22 cell derived neurons engineered to express SNCA at control or high levels (18), on an isogenic background.  
23 Both control and SNCA o/e cells displayed a native-like membrane potential of  $61 \pm 5$  mV (n=4),  
24 characteristic for neurons, and generated action potentials of classical shape in response to current injection.  
25 Action potentials in SNCA o/e cells were generated with significantly lower frequency:  $4.2 \pm 1.3$  Hz vs.  
26  $18.7 \pm 3.4$  Hz in control,  $P < 0.01$ , n=4, 7, Student's t-test. 1  $\mu$ M of Tetrodotoxin (TTX) added into the  
27 perfusion solution fully suppressed action potential generation, revealing the presence of voltage-gated  
28 sodium channels in the tested cells (SFigure 4 Aa & b).

29 To test the calcium response to physiological stimuli, we applied glutamate (10 $\mu$ M) which induces a typical  
30 calcium transient in control neurons, and SNCA o/e (SFigure 4 Ba & d, CTRL; n=47 cells, SNCAx3; n=32  
31 cells). In agreement with previous results, glutamate-induced calcium signal in SNCA o/e was significantly

1 higher than those found in CTRL (signal rose to  $1.3\pm 0.24$  Fura-2 ratio compared to  $0.7\pm 0.08$  Fura-2 ratio,  
2  $p<0.05$ ). More than 60% cells demonstrated typical response to plasma membrane depolarisation with  
3 opening of voltage-gated calcium channels (SFigure 4 Bc & d). Again, SNCA o/e cells had significantly  
4 higher calcium responses to 50mM KCl (SFigure 4 Bc & d, CTRL;  $0.92\pm 0.1$  Fura-2 ratio,  $n=39$ , SNCAx3;  
5 compared to  $0.61\pm 0.08$  Fura-2 ratio in control,  $n=38$  cells;  $p<0.05$ ).

6 Application of  $100\mu\text{M}$  ATP stimulates calcium signalling via P2Y receptors, expressed predominantly in  
7 astrocytes. Approximately 40% of cells in the field demonstrated a calcium response to application of ATP,  
8 and SNCA o/e cells demonstrated a higher ATP-induced calcium signal than control cells (SFigure 4 Bb &  
9 d, CTRL;  $1.21\pm 2.2$  Fura-2 ratio,  $n=37$ , SNCAx3; compared to control  $0.97\pm 0.07$  Fura-2 ratio,  $n=47$  cells;  
10  $p<0.05$ ).

11

## 12 **Alpha-synuclein aggregates disrupt membranes and alter membrane conductance.**

13 We investigated how  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregates disrupt membranes and induce ion fluxes. Using a ATTO425-  
14 labelled Aptamer that recognises aggregates of  $\alpha$ -synuclein (32), we confirmed the increase in aggregates  
15 in the SNCA x3 cells, demonstrated both by intensity, and area of cell occupied by aggregates. (Figure 2  
16 A). This aptamer, using super resolution microscopy (ADPAINT) has demonstrated an increase in larger  
17 aggregates in SNCA x3 neurons (32). We performed an oligomer ELISA to measure the soluble aggregates  
18 in the SNCA x3 and CTRL cell lysates (SFigure 5), and demonstrated a selective increase in oligomers in  
19 the SNCA x3 neurons (SFigure 5 B).

20 Aggregates formed in the SNCA x3 cells, and secreted in the media, are capable of permeabilising  
21 membranes, and inducing ion fluxes. Using a single vesicle assay, we demonstrated that application of  
22 SNCAx3 lysates and media induced calcium influx across liposomes. This calcium influx was blocked after  
23 incubation of SNCAx3 lysates and media (25x dilution) with Anti-  $\alpha$ -synuclein (phospho S129) antibody  
24 (see Figure 2 Ba for experimental paradigm). Therefore, both secreted oligomers in the extracellular space  
25 of SNCA x3, as well as internally generated oligomers possess a structural conformation that can interact  
26 with, and disrupt, membranes (Figure 2 Bb & c) to induce calcium fluxes.

27 To test the effect of increased endogenous  $\alpha$ -synuclein on the membrane conductance of neurons, we  
28 performed patch-clamp recordings from outside-out membrane patches in a voltage-clamp mode. To isolate  
29 the response solely of channels formed by  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregates, we added to the external solution  $50\mu\text{M}$   
30 D-APV,  $10\mu\text{M}$  NBQX,  $100\mu\text{M}$  picrotoxin and  $1\mu\text{M}$  strychnine. We registered single-channel openings  
31 in patches excised from iPSC-derived neurons with SNCA x3 (channel conductance  $189\pm 26$  pS,  $n=5$ ) while

1 no single-channel activity was observed in control neuronal cultures when a similar cocktail of ion channel  
2 blockers was applied (Figure 2 Ca). However, we managed to detect activity only in a small fraction of  
3 SNCA x3 neurons (Figure 2 Ca); five successful recordings out of 29 outside-out patches (each patch was  
4 pulled from a separate cell). To calculate the amplitude of the ion channel opening, all point histograms  
5 were constructed and fitted to a double Gaussian function. The mode value for the open state was fitted at  
6 2.17 pA (Figure 2 Cb). This data suggests the presence of channel formation on the plasmalemmal  
7 membrane of neurons with high levels of  $\alpha$ -synuclein, independent on any known ion channels.

8 We investigated the effect of  $\alpha$ -syn aggregates on the ion permeability of membranes, using patch-clamp  
9 of giant liposomes exposed to recombinant  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers. We detected single channel activity  
10 induced by oligomers of  $\alpha$ -syn, but not monomers (Figure 2 Da & b), and these channels had multiple  
11 conductance levels, with opening and partial inactivity to stable subconductance at a constant voltage,  
12 followed by higher conductance states induced at -20mV.

13

14 ***Increased expression of  $\alpha$ -synuclein leads to generation of reactive oxygen species and membrane***  
15 ***oxidation.***

16 We have reported that oligomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein drives the aberrant generation of intracellular superoxide and  
17 hydrogen peroxide, and the depletion of antioxidants (17, 34). Basal superoxide production is increased in  
18 the SNCA x3 iPSC-derived neurons (17) and addition of recombinant oligomers further increased  
19 superoxide production (CTRL;  $175 \pm 11.9 \%$ , N=4,  $p < 0.0001$ , SNCA x3;  $158.3 \%$  to  $343.0 \pm 37.3 \%$ , N=4,  
20  $p < 0.0001$ , Figure 3 A). Consistently, hES cells with SNCA o/e also produce abnormal levels of superoxide  
21 (SFigure 6). SNCA x3 iPSC-derived neurons also exhibit an increase in basal lipid peroxidation from  $0.161$   
22  $\pm 0.004$  to  $0.241 \pm 0.007$ , both N=4,  $p < 0.0001$ ; addition of oligomers to control cells increased lipid  
23 peroxidation to  $0.456 \pm 0.003$ , N=4,  $p < 0.0001$ ; similarly, addition of oligomers to SNCA x3 increased lipid  
24 peroxidation to  $0.408 \pm 0.005$ , N=4,  $p < 0.0001$  (Figure 3 B).

25 Isotopic reinforced polyunsaturated fatty acids (D-PUFAs) incorporate into lipid membranes and render  
26 them resistant to the ROS initiated chain reaction of lipid peroxidation. We pre-treated cells with  $10 \mu\text{M}$   
27 deuterated Linolenic acid (D4-Lnn), which prevented oligomer induced lipid peroxidation, and restored  
28 basal levels of lipid peroxidation in the SNCA x3 cells (Fig 3 B). Therefore, recombinant oligomers, as well  
29 as oligomers generated in the SNCA x3 cells, induce oxidation of PUFAs, which can be modulated by the  
30 use of deuterated species.

31

1 ***Lipid peroxidation influences the physical interaction of aggregates and membranes.***

2  $\alpha$ -synuclein- membrane interactions in cells are transient and difficult to capture. Membrane binding to the  
3 plasma membrane is a prerequisite prior to internalization of  $\alpha$ -synuclein into the cell (35). Labelled  
4 oligomers (oligomers generated from AF488 monomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein) were applied to cells loaded with  
5 either a cell mask dye, or a membrane dye. Internalization of fluorescently labelled monomer and oligomer  
6 is demonstrated in figure 3 Ca and SFigure 7 Aa. Vitamin E is a tocopherol that inhibits lipid peroxidation  
7 by scavenging lipid peroxy radicals. We pre-incubated cells with Trolox, a water soluble analogue of  $\alpha$ -  
8 tocopherol which is able to incorporate into both water and lipid compartments, reduced the  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
9 accumulation in the cell (as demonstrated by reduced AF488 area/cell, Figure 3 Cb and SFigure 7Ab).

10 Next, we tested the effect of membrane oxidation on insertion of aggregates into membranes utilizing the  
11 membrane Permeabilization assay (described in Figure 2 Ca). Using vesicles generated from oxidized  
12 lipids, there is higher calcium influx on exposure to the same concentration of  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers,  
13 compared to control lipid vesicle (Figure 3 D).

14 Together, this data suggests that under conditions of membrane oxidation, there is an enhanced membrane  
15 binding of oligomers of  $\alpha$ -synuclein, allowing ion fluxes across the membrane, as well as entry into the  
16 cell. This interaction is reduced in cells with non-oxidized membranes.

17

18 ***Lipid peroxidation drives  $\alpha$ -synuclein induced abnormal calcium signaling.***

19 Next we tested whether the  $\alpha$ -synuclein induced calcium signaling is affected by lipid peroxidation. We  
20 demonstrated abnormal glutamate induced calcium signaling in *SNCA* x3 neurons (Figure 4Ab & Bb). Pre-  
21 incubation of cells for 24 hours with D4-Lnn restored the glutamate-induced calcium signaling back to  
22 control levels (from  $2.50 \pm 0.27$ , N=7, n=100, Figure 4 Ab & Da to  $1.43 \pm 0.25$ , n=7, N=7, p=0.0113, Figure  
23 4 Ac & Da after the use of D4-Lnn). Pre-incubation of cells with D4-Lnn interestingly abolished the KCL-  
24 induced opening of voltage-dependent calcium channels (from  $1.65 \pm 0.22$ , N=9, n=114, Figure 4 Ab & Db  
25 to  $0.30 \pm 0.09$ , N=5, n=165, p=0.0009, Figure 4 Ab & c, Db). ATP-induced calcium signal is significantly  
26 smaller in the *SNCA* x3 cells compared to control (CTRL:  $1.92 \pm 0.27$ , N=4, n=165, *SNCA* x3:  $0.75 \pm 0.11$ ,  
27 N=4, n=114, p=0.0062, Figure 4 Ba & c). This was also restored by the pre-incubation of D4-Lnn ( $1.70 \pm$   
28  $0.30$ , N=4, n=120, p=0.0251, Figure 4 Bc & Dc).

29 We previously showed that dopamine induces calcium signaling through dopamine receptor independent  
30 mechanisms (36, 37), and this includes (i) the opening of voltage dependent calcium channels following

1 dopamine uptake and depolarization of the plasmalemmal membrane and (ii) dopamine induced lipid  
2 peroxidation and activation of phospholipase C and release of calcium from ER stores. Application of two  
3 stimuli of dopamine induces a typical calcium response in control cells (37). However, *SNCA x3* cells  
4 exhibited a significantly higher calcium response to the second stimulus of dopamine compared to control  
5 cells (*SNCA x3*: from  $0.61 \pm 0.09$ ,  $n=160$ ,  $N=8$ ,  $n=160$  to  $1.89 \pm 0.21$ ,  $N=6$ ,  $n=136$ ,  $p=0.0001$ ; Figure 4 Ca  
6 & b). The calcium response to dopamine in *SNCA x3* was fully abolished when cells were pre-treated with  
7 D4-Lnn ( $0.16 \pm 0.08$ ,  $N=4$ ,  $n=148$ ,  $p=0.0002$ ; Figure 4 C & c, Dd). Complete prevention of the dopamine  
8 induced calcium response by D-PUFAs is likely to be due to blockade of both insertion of channels into the  
9 membranes (in keeping with depolarizing stimuli), as well as blockade of the PLC/IP3 response. This data  
10 suggests that the incorporation of  $\alpha$ -synuclein as a channel into the plasma membrane occurs when the  
11 PUFAs in membranes have undergone lipid peroxidation. Non-oxidisable PUFAs lead to membranes that  
12 are resistant to the insertion of oligomers and their channel-forming activity, and do not demonstrate  
13 glutamate/dopamine induced calcium deregulation.

14

#### 15 *Oligomer-induced toxicity is dependent on iron and lipid peroxidation.*

16 *SNCA x3* cells exhibit reduced cell viability compared to CTRL over time in culture, shown in Figure 5  
17 Aa-b. We tested the sensitivity to ferroptosis of our iPSC derived synucleinopathy model using the  
18 ferroptosis inducer, erastin, and we show that erastin induces a dose dependent increase in cell death, shown  
19 in Figure 5 B. Oligomer-induced oxidative stress is dependent on transition metal ions (17). We tested the  
20 effects of metal ion chelator (Desferoxamine, DFO), inhibitor of lipid peroxidation (D4-Lnn), and a  
21 ferroptosis inhibitor (Ferrostatin-1) on cell death in synucleinopathy (38). Application of oligomers but not  
22 monomers, induced cell death in control (Figure 5 Ca & b) neurons and *SNCA x3* (Figure 5 Ca & c)  
23 neurons. Application of three different ferroptosis inhibitors, deuterated PUFAs, iron chelator  
24 desferrioxamine (DFO, Sigma), and ferrostatin-1 (Ferr-1, Sigma, Cat No. SML0583) each significantly  
25 reduced oligomer induced cell death back to basal levels in control cells (Figure 5 Ca & b) and in *SNCA*  
26 *x3* cells (Figure 5 Ca & c). Taken together this data suggests that  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregates may induce  
27 ferroptosis, and that inhibitors of ferroptosis prevent  $\alpha$ -synuclein-induced cell death, and inducers of  
28 ferroptosis exacerbate cell death.

29

#### 30 **Discussion**

1 Ferroptosis (39) describes a form of non-apoptotic regulated cell death occurring as a consequence of iron-  
2 dependent accumulation of lethal lipid peroxidation. Ferroptosis is characterized by cell swelling (oncosis),  
3 altered mitochondrial morphology (40), and unique features of lipid peroxidation with preferential  
4 oxidation of phosphatidylethanolamine (41). Suppression of the formation of oxidized lipids halts cell  
5 death. The downstream pathways whereby lipid peroxidation leads to cell dysfunction or death are not fully  
6 established, but are proposed to include loss of membrane integrity, opening of pores and loss of ionic  
7 homeostasis, formation of free radicals that inactivates membrane embedded proteins required for cell  
8 viability (42). The major criteria for determining ferroptosis are the ability to suppress death by iron  
9 chelators, lipophilic antioxidants, inhibition of lipid peroxidation, and depletion of lipid peroxidation.

10 In neurodegeneration (43), a number of ferroptosis features are commonly reported, in particular depletion  
11 of glutathione, accumulation of lipid peroxidation products, excess extracellular glutamate, decreased  
12 cortical GPX4, increased lipoxygenase (LOX) activity, protection from lipophilic antioxidant vitamin E (in  
13 AD), protection from iron chelators (44), and protection from pioglitazone, an ACSL4 inhibitor (45).  
14 Additionally, brain iron levels rise in during aging and neurodegenerative disease, which can be detected  
15 in living people (46) and in postmortem tissue. However, lipid peroxidation and ferroptosis has not been  
16 previously investigated in synucleinopathy models of PD (47).

17 Here we study the complex intersection between protein aggregation, calcium deregulation and lipid  
18 peroxidation. We have demonstrated that abnormal calcium fluxes, as well as abnormal intracellular stores,  
19 is an important biological property of specific  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers, when applied exogenously to cell  
20 systems (13, 48). In this study, we demonstrate that increased endogenous levels of  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers,  
21 are associated with high cytosolic calcium influx in response to activation of glutamate receptors or changes  
22 in plasmalemmal membrane potential. This could be attributable either to high expression of potential-  
23 sensitive calcium channels or increased activation of glutamate receptors. Our data suggests an increased  
24 presence of potential-sensitive channels on the plasmalemmal membrane of the human neurons with high  
25 levels of oligomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein. Such channels are known to be formed by the effect of  $\alpha$ -synuclein beta-  
26 sheet rich oligomers on membranes (13). Notably, solution and solid-state NMR methods have confirmed  
27 that the exogenously applied oligomers used in this study, result in maximal membrane disruption by  
28 allowing the structured oligomer core to insert into the lipid bilayer and disrupt the integrity (14). In our  
29 study, oligomers induce ion fluxes in the absence of the NMDA receptor components in artificial systems  
30 (liposomes), and additionally oligomers induce channel formation in the presence of NMDA blockade in  
31 outside out patches in cells, Taken together, this supports the hypothesis that the  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomeric  
32 species alone are able to insert into membranes (in particular oxidized membranes), upon depolarizing



1 stimuli, leading to a voltage-dependent increase in cytosolic calcium influx in response to glutamate, KCl  
2 and dopamine.

3 The second key feature is the ability for oligomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein, both when applied exogenously or when  
4 generated endogenously, to induce the production of superoxide and hydrogen peroxide (17) and lipid  
5 peroxidation (49). Notably, the mechanism of oligomer induced ROS production and lipid peroxidation is  
6 iron dependent, and non-enzymatic, likely dependent on the Fenton reaction (18) (17). As protein  
7 aggregates interact with, and disrupt, lipid membranes, we sought to modulate this interaction through  
8 altering membrane properties by their oxidation state (50). Lipidomics has previously been used to  
9 demonstrate that polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) are the most susceptible lipids in the course of  
10 ferroptosis (41), and that preventing peroxidation by supplementing cells with PUFAs deuterated at the  
11 susceptible bis-allylic carbon suppresses ferroptosis (51). Based on this, supplementation of media with  
12 deuterated D4-linolenic acid has shown to prevent lipid peroxidation (49), and also to prevent ferroptosis  
13 (51). We show that supplementation of the media with deuterated PUFAs is able to prevent oligomer  
14 induced lipid peroxidation. We further demonstrated that in the absence of lipid peroxidation, the  $\alpha$ -  
15 synuclein-induced calcium dysregulation is also abolished, and physiological calcium signaling is restored.  
16 This effect is true for glutamate-induced, KCL-induced and also dopamine-induced calcium signaling  
17 which induces both a calcium influx (36), as well as generates ROS (37). We therefore confirmed that lipid  
18 peroxidation allows membranes to be more susceptible to aggregates inserting into them and disruption of  
19 ion fluxes. Stabilization of the oxidation state of the membrane prevents additional oligomeric channel  
20 insertion, and reduces ion fluxes across the membrane. Our hypothesis is that the oxidation state of the  
21 membrane confers its susceptibility to a physical and functional interaction with beta sheet rich oligomeric  
22 proteins. It is possible that oxidized lipids recruit more oligomers to the membrane, or that any individual  
23 rare oligomer event results in greater disruption of the membrane and more calcium influx, and it is  
24 challenging to distinguish these two possibilities (52).

25 Iron chelators, d-PUFAs, and ferrostatin were all able to suppress cell death induced by toxic oligomeric  $\alpha$ -  
26 synuclein, or by dopamine in neurons. Inhibition of toxicity using reduction of iron, suppression of lipid  
27 peroxidation, and ferrostatin meets the basic criteria set out for the definition of ferroptosis (53), and  
28 therefore we raise the hypothesis that  $\alpha$ -synuclein may contribute to cell death by this pathway, while  
29 recognizing that other forms of apoptosis and necrosis also co-exist. The co-dependence of protein  
30 aggregation, membrane damage and oxidative stress in ferroptosis in neurodegeneration may underlie why  
31 models based on a single factor alone (eg GPX4 deletion) do not exhibit neurodegeneration (54).

1 Cellular aging, dopamine and  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers place the cell in a state of aberrant ROS production  
2 and glutathione depletion, resulting in oxidative stress with lipid peroxidation. Oxidation of specific  
3 PUFAs, leads to the insertion of  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers into the membrane forming channels that open in  
4 response to depolarization of the plasma membrane. This renders neurons vulnerable to physiological  
5 calcium signaling and exposes them to high levels of cytosolic calcium fluxes that may cause excitotoxicity  
6 and cell death. At least part of the  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregate-induced cell death is related to ferroptosis in which  
7 the iron dependent accumulation of lipid peroxidation plays an important role in the demise of neurons.  
8 Whilst in cellular models, targeting lipid peroxidation specifically using deuterated PUFAs, is a useful tool  
9 to demonstrate the contribution of lipid oxidation to calcium fluxes, its direct application to patients may  
10 be hindered by the important physiological roles that lipid oxidation also plays in neuronal function.  
11 Nonetheless, modulation of lipid peroxidation or ferroptosis may represent new potential therapeutic  
12 approaches for Parkinson's disease.

13

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21

#### 22 **Conflict of Interest**

23 M Schepinov is employed by Retrotope Inc. There is no other conflict of interest.

24

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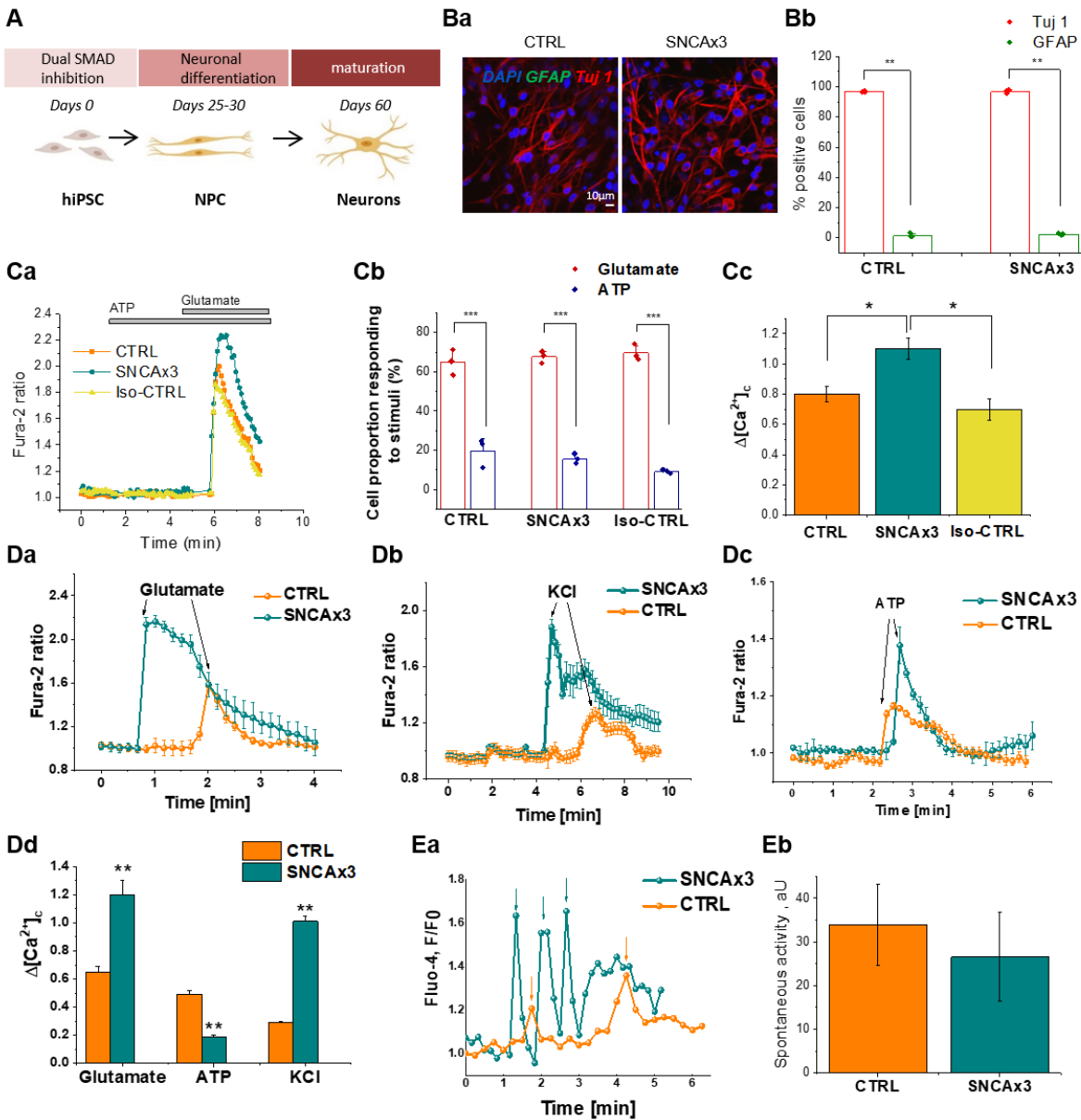
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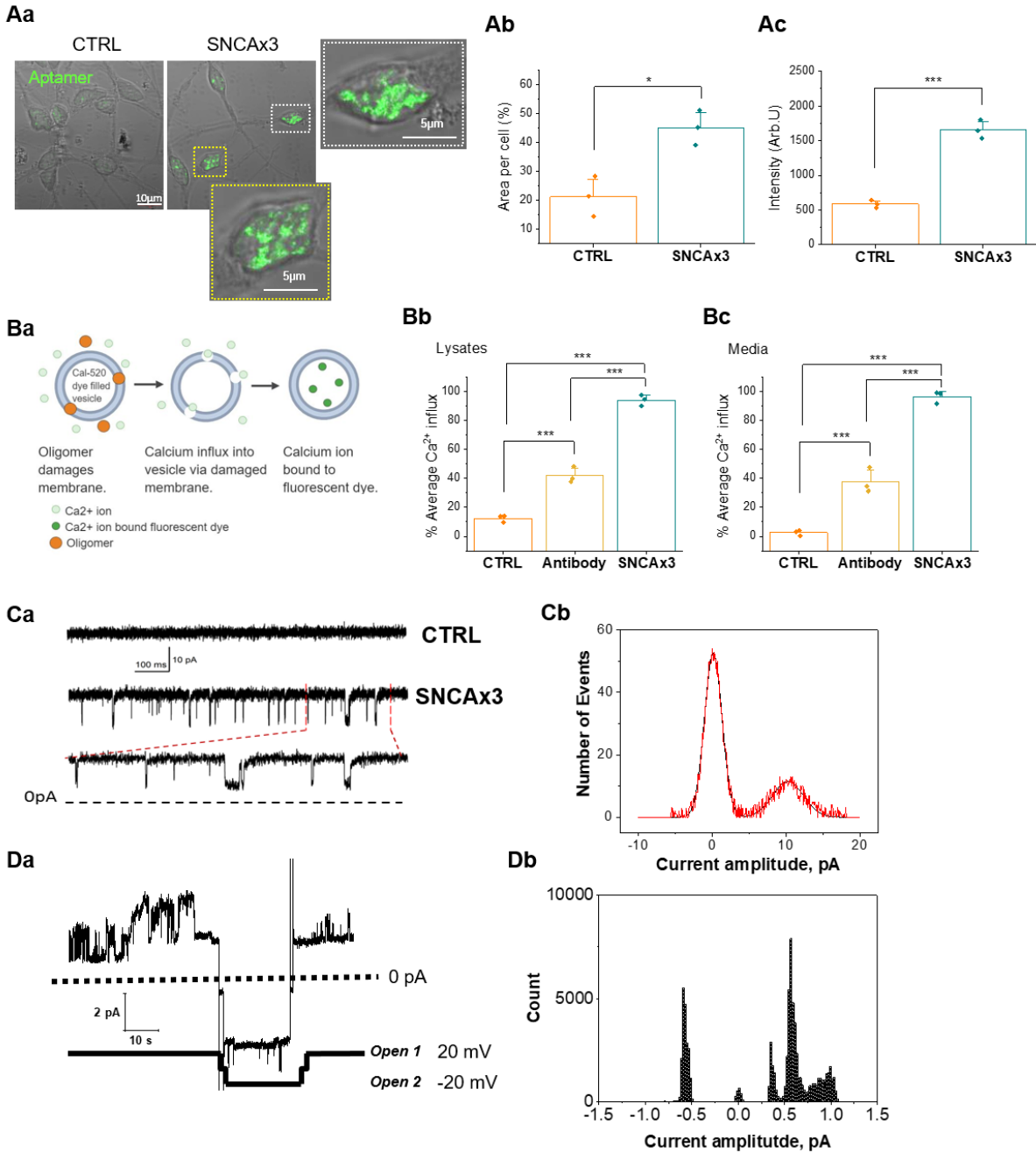
# 1 Figures



2

3 **Figure 1. Abnormal calcium signalling in iPSC-derived neurons with SNCA x3.** A) Protocol to  
 4 differentiate iPSC to cortical neurons. B) The majority of cells are Tuj 1 (and not GFAP-positive) in both  
 5 control (CTRL) and mutant (SNCAx3) lines, Ba) Representative images with Tuj 1 (neuronal marker, red)  
 6 and GFAP (astrocytic marker, green), DAPI (total cell number, blue). Bb) Percentage cell proportion  
 7 expressing Tuj 1 or GFAP, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA. Ca) Representative tracers of cytosolic calcium rise in  
 8 response to 5µM glutamate not to ATP. Cb) Percent cell population responding to either 5µM glutamate or  
 9 100µM ATP, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA. Cc) Application of 5µM glutamate induced a rise in cytosolic calcium,  
 10 which was significantly higher in SNCA x3 neurons compared to control neurons, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA.

1 Da) 5uM glutamate induces calcium signaling. Db) Depolarization of cells with 50mM KCl results in  
2 opening of voltage dependent calcium channels and a cytosolic calcium signal, which was significantly  
3 higher in SNCA x3 neurons compared to control. Dc) Stimulation of the P2Y receptors with 100uM ATP  
4 induced a cytosolic calcium signal that was significantly lower in the SNCA x3 cells compared to control.  
5 Dd) Histogram demonstrates the mean values of the calcium signals induced by glutamate, KCl and ATP  
6 (Mean  $\pm$  SEM), N = 3 per condition for CTRL & SNCA x3. Ea) Registered events of spiking activity in  
7 individual control and SNCA triplication cells (spikes are marked with arrows, orange-CTRL, teal-SNCA  
8 x3). Eb) No of events per cell\*min\*1000 (Mean  $\pm$  SEM). n = 180 CTRL and 125 SNCA x3 cells. \* $P < 0.05$ ,  
9 \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

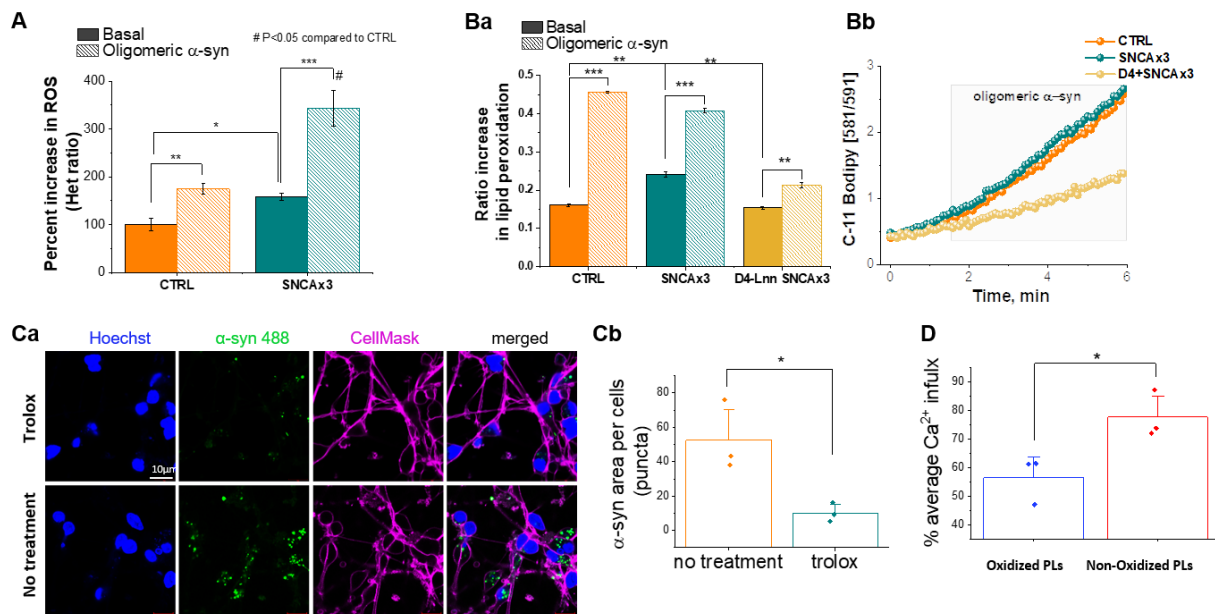


1

2 **Figure 2.  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregates disrupt membranes.** A) iPSC derived cortical neurons from patients  
 3 carrying 3x SNCA exhibit aggregates. Aa - c) Aptamer expression level (both area and intensity) is higher  
 4 in iPSC derived neurons with SNCA x3, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA x3. Ba) Illustration of membrane  
 5 permeabilization assay by measuring Ca<sup>2+</sup> influx in vesicles. Bb & c) Cell lysates and media from SNCAx3  
 6 induce higher level of permeabilization than control, prevented by antibody (phospho S129) binding of  $\alpha$ -  
 7 synuclein aggregates, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA. Ca) Single-channel activity of  $\alpha$ -synuclein in the membrane  
 8 of iPSC-derived neurons. Top: control recording from outside-out patch pulled from control neurons.



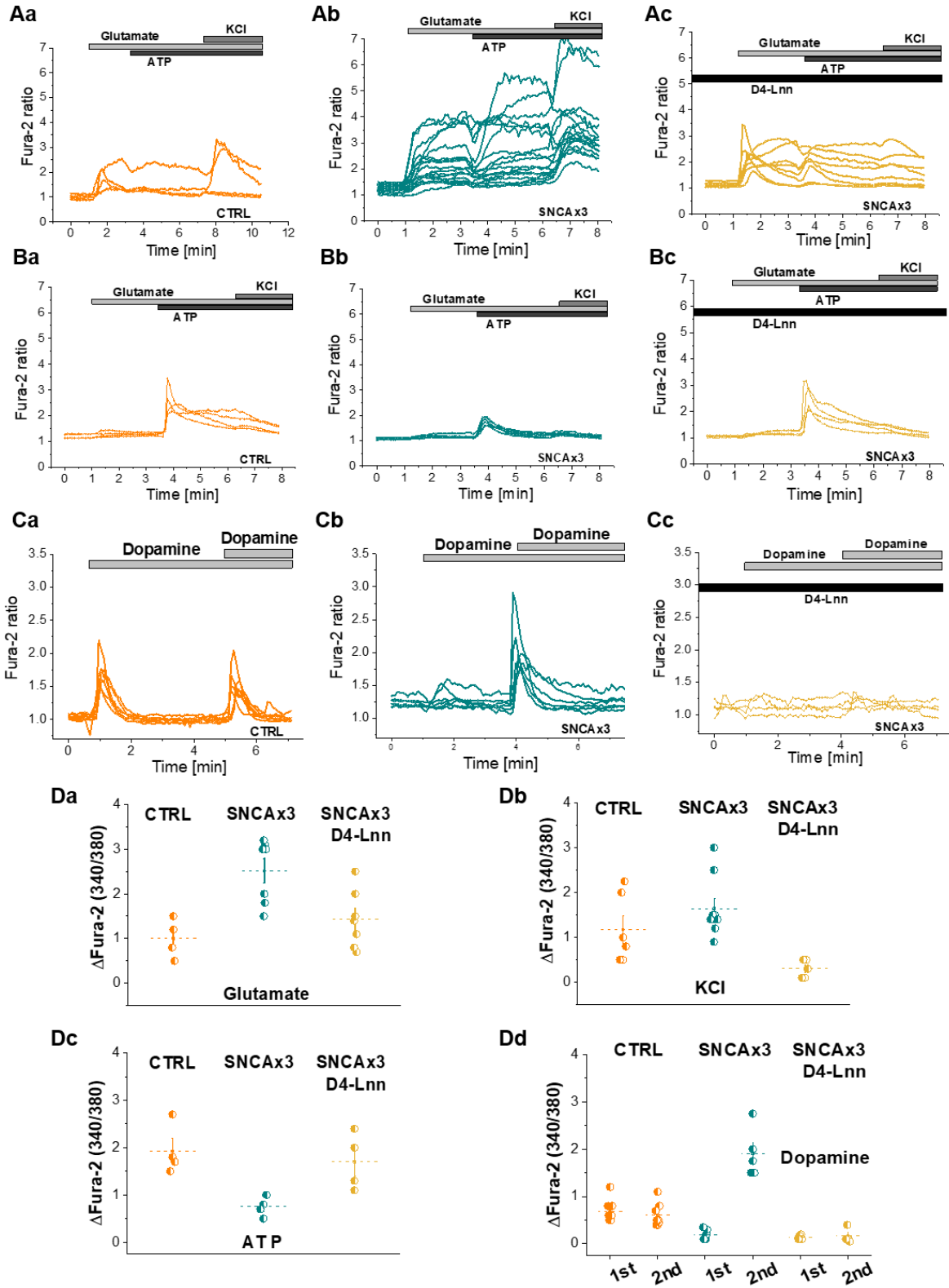
1 Middle: recording from outside-out patch pulled from SNCA x3 neurons. Bottom: extended section of the  
 2 medium trace marked by the dashed lines. Vertical scale bar applying to all three traces; horizontal (time)  
 3 scale bar apply to the top and medium trace. Cb) All-points amplitude histogram of channel openings in the  
 4 membrane of iPSC-derived neurons with SNCA3x, fitted with double-Gaussian function, N = 3 CTRL &  
 5 SNCA. Da) Single-channel activity of  $\alpha$ -synuclein in the membrane of giant liposomes consisting of lipids.  
 6 Channels open followed by partial inactivation to a stable sub-conductance level (open 1). After switch to  
 7  $-20$  mV the channels open to a higher conductance state (open 2). Db) Current amplitude histogram of the  
 8  $\alpha$ -synuclein channel activity in giant liposome patch represented in Ea. \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ ,  
 9 \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .



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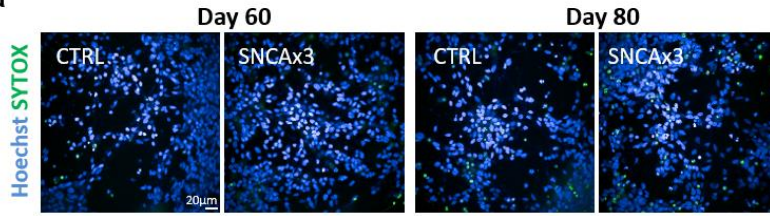
11 **Figure 3. ROS production and lipid peroxidation induced by  $\alpha$ -synuclein in neurons.** A & B) SNCA  
 12 3x neurons are vulnerable to exogenously applied  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers A) Rate of ROS production in  
 13 iPSC-derived SNCA x3 neurons is higher than in control neurons. (N = 3 CTRL, SNCA & D4-Lnn treated  
 14 SNCA). Ba) Basal lipid peroxidation rate in iPSC-derived neurons with  $\alpha$ -synuclein 3x is higher than the  
 15 control neurons, but could be restored through pre-treatment with D4-Linolenic acid (D4-Lnn) in SNCA  
 16 x3 neurons, which also prevented oligomer-induced lipid peroxidation (N = 3 CTRL, SNCA & D4-Lnn  
 17 treated SNCA). Bb) Representative traces of Ba. C) Characterization of  $\alpha$ -synuclein – membrane  
 18 interactions. Ca) Representative images of exogenous oligomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein uptake (AF488 fluorescence,  
 19 green) into the cytoplasm (plasmic membranes are labelled with CellMask™ Depp Red dye; magenta  
 20 colour) in control neurons with or without Trolox treatment. Oligomer uptake was significantly reduced  
 21 when membrane oxidation was inhibited by Trolox, N = 5 basal & Trolox. Cb) Trolox inhibits uptake of

- 1 aggregate forms of  $\alpha$ -synuclein. D) Calcium influx in the membrane permeabilisation assay was increased
- 2 when vesicles composed of oxidised lipids were generated. 16:0 – 20:4 PC non-oxidised membrane. Ox
- 3 PAPC oxidised membrane, N = 3 non & oxidized membrane. \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

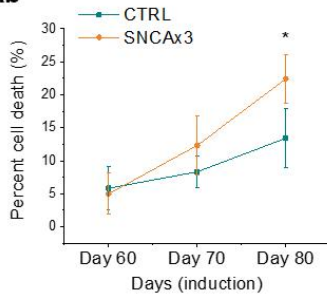


1 **Figure 4. Prevention of lipid peroxidation restores calcium dysregulation in SNCA 3x neurons.** A)  
2 Representative traces showing deuterated PUFAs restore abnormal glutamate-induced calcium signaling or  
3 KCl-induced depolarisation in SNCA x3 neurons (Ab) to control levels (Ac). B) ATP induced calcium  
4 signal is smaller in the SNCA x3 cells (Bb) compared to control (Ba). This was also restored by pre-  
5 incubation of the cells with D-PUFAs (Bc). C) Double bolus of dopamine (50µM) in SNCA x3 neurons  
6 evoked dysregulated calcium signal (Cb) in comparison to control response (Ca). Cc) Pre-incubation of the  
7 SNCA x3 cells with D4-Lnn prevents dopamine induced cytosolic calcium signals. D) Quantification  
8 histograms depicting the preventive effect of deuterated PUFAs (D4-Lnn) on the calcium response to  
9 application of glutamate (a, N = 4 CTRL, N = 5 SNCA, N = 7 D4-Lnn treated SNCA), KCl (b, N = 5 CTRL,  
10 N = 7 SNCA, N = 4 D4-Lnn treated SNCA), ATP (c, N = 4 CTRL, SNCA & D4-Lnn treated SNCA) or  
11 dopamine (d, N = 5 CTRL, N = 3 & 4 SNCA, N = 3 D4-Lnn treated SNCA) in both control and iPSC-  
12 derived neurons with SNCA x3. \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

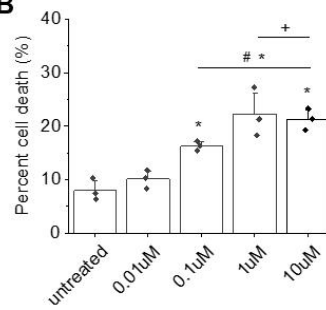
**Aa**



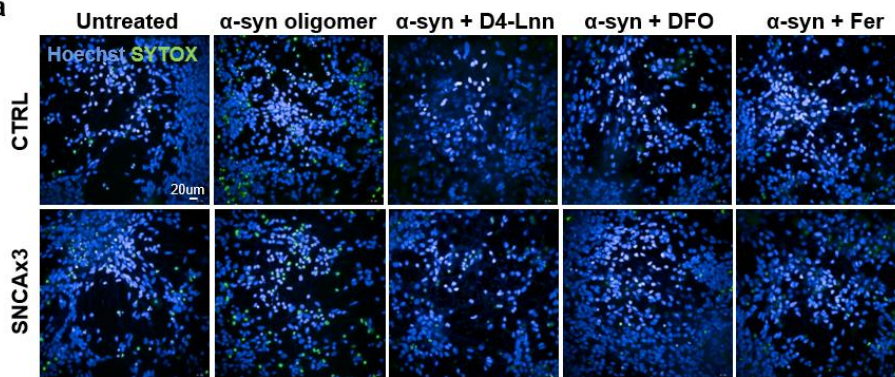
**Ab**



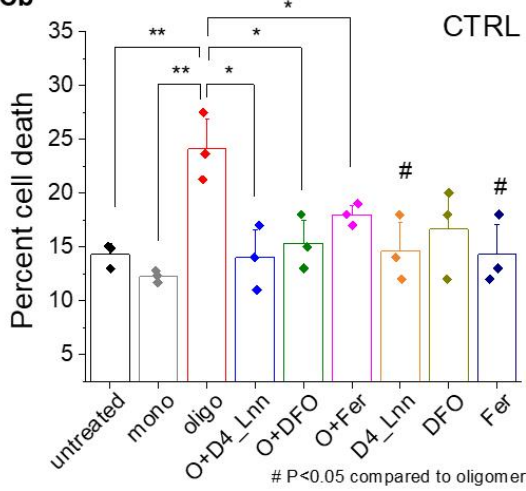
**B**



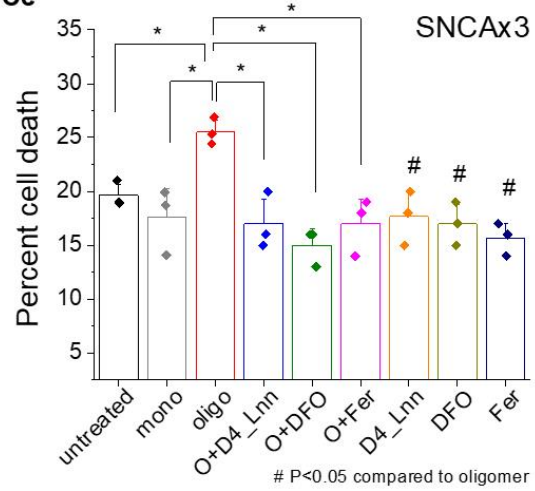
**Ca**



**Cb**

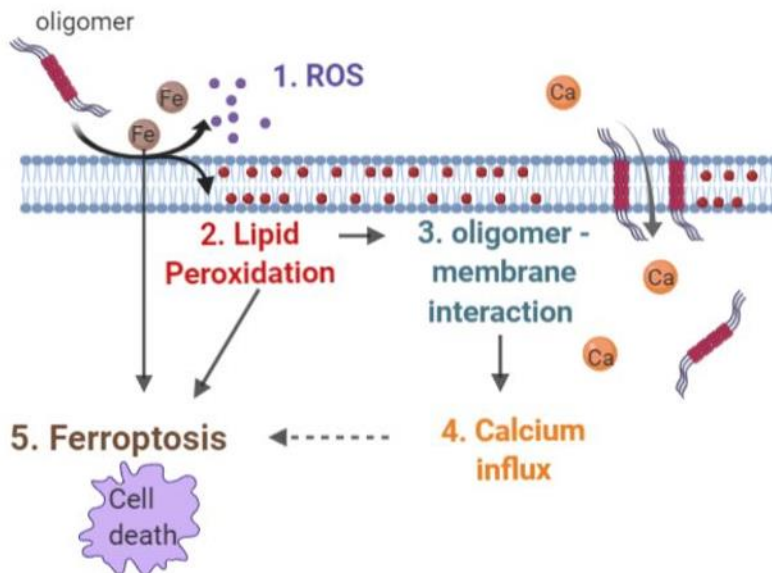


**Cc**



1 **Figure 5. Increased cell death rate in SNCA x3 neurons is dependent on lipid peroxidation and on**  
2 **the presence of iron.** A) Cell viability of iPSC derived neurons over time in culture. Aa) Upon completion  
3 of neuronal maturation > day 60 (22), SNCAx3 cells show similar cell viability with CTRL. Neuronal loss  
4 of SNCA x3 is significantly increased over the following 20 days. Ab) Representative images of cell death.  
5 B) A dose response (0.01 $\mu$ M – 10 $\mu$ M) effect of Erastin, a ferroptosis inducer, on toxicity in iPSC derived  
6 cortical neurons. 100uM Erastin data was excluded due to the high toxicity preventing accurate  
7 quantification of cell death (\*  $P < 0.05$  compared to untreated, #  $P < 0.05$  compared to 0.01 $\mu$ M and +  $P <$   
8  $0.05$  compared to 0.1 $\mu$ M condition. \* $P < 0.05$ , # $P < 0.05$  compared to untreated, + $P < 0.05$  compared to  
9 0.01 $\mu$ M). Ca) Representative images depicting  $\alpha$ -synuclein-induced toxicity induced by 1 $\mu$ M  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
10 monomer (10nM oligomer) overnight and its rescue by blocking ferroptosis. D-PUFA (48hr), Ferrostatin  
11 (1hr) & DFO (1hr) were pre-incubated prior to oligomer treatment). Blue-Hoechst 33342 (total number of  
12 cells); green-SYTOX green (dead cells). Cb & c) Comparison of the effects of transition metal ion chelator  
13 (DFO), inhibitor of lipid peroxidation (D4-Lnn), and Fer (ferrostatin-1) a ferroptosis inhibitor on cell death,  
14 induced by  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomers within control (B, N = 3 per condition) and SNCA triplication (C, N = 3  
15 per condision). \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

16

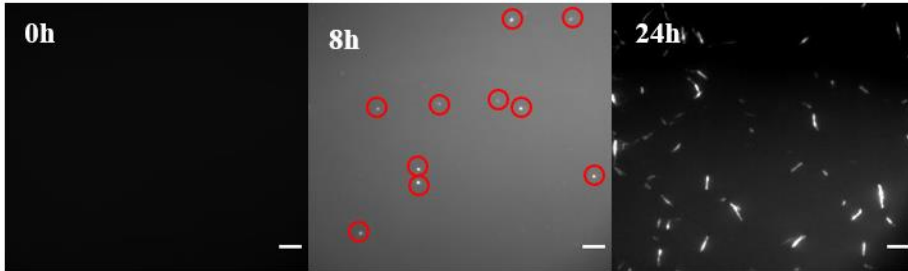


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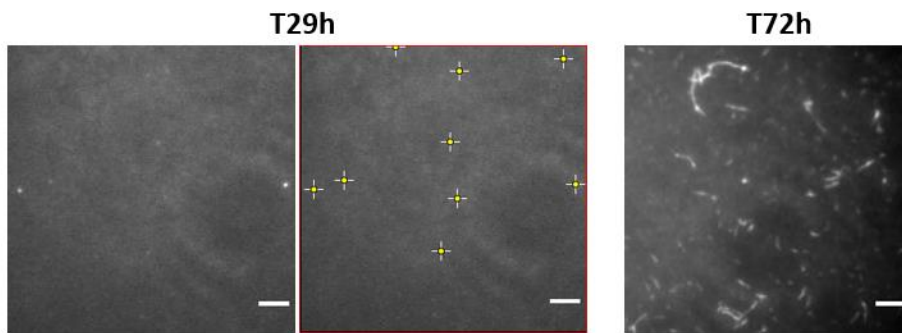
18 **Figure 6. Schematic diagram illustrating mechanisms of  $\alpha$ -synuclein induced ferroptosis.** Oligomeric  
19  $\alpha$ -synuclein induces 1) ROS and 2) lipid peroxidation within the membrane which results in an increase in

1 3) oligomer – membrane interaction, and consequently causes 4) calcium influx. The consequence of those  
2 events leads to cell death, 5) “Ferroptosis”.

Aa



Ab

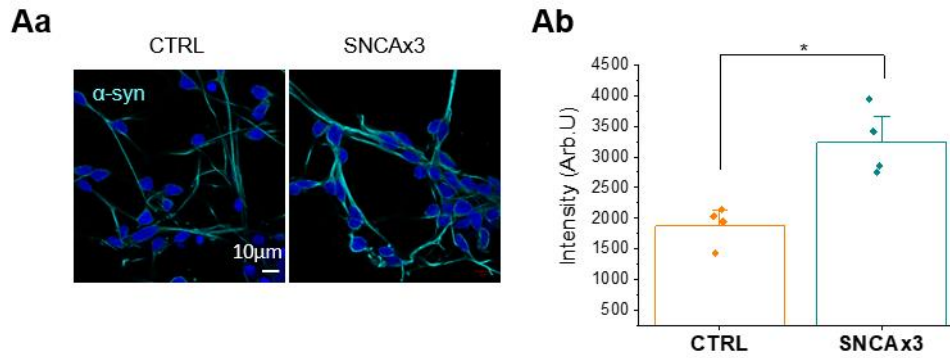


3

4 **Supplementary Figure 1. Characterization of aggregates using single molecule TIRF imaging.** Aa)  
5 sm-TIRF of  $\alpha$ -synuclein aggregation time points in the presence of 5  $\mu$ M of ThT. From left to right 0h  
6 (monomers only, no ThT signal), 8h (fluorescent puncta indicates the presence of oligomers – red circles),  
7 and 24h (most  $\alpha$ S has been converted into fibrils). Images were taken using 2.8  $\mu$ M of  $\alpha$ -synuclein and are  
8 displayed with the same contrast except for 24h. Error bar is 5  $\mu$ m. Ab). FRET image of T29h after  
9 incubation of  $\alpha$ -synAF-594 +  $\alpha$ -synAF488. Representative image of early aggregates (16). sm-TIRF FRET  
10 image of T72h after incubation of aSYn-594 + aSyn-488. In this study, we used T29h incubation samples  
11 as oligomeric species. Scale bar is 5 $\mu$ m.

12

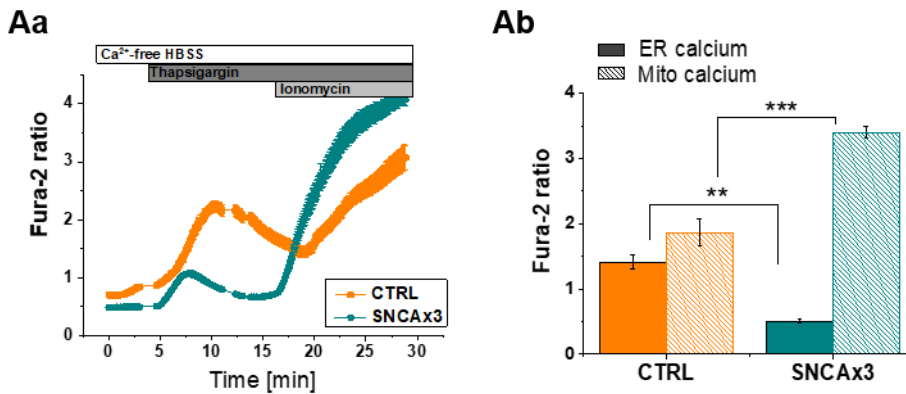




1

2 **Supplementary Figure 2. Characterization of synucleinopathy model** Aa) Representative images of  $\alpha$ -  
 3 synuclein immunocytochemistry using total  $\alpha$ -synuclein antibody. Ab) Monomeric  $\alpha$ -synuclein expression  
 4 is significantly higher in SNCA x3 cells than control, N = 4 CTRL & SNCAx3. The fluorescent intensity  
 5 (arb.U) of total  $\alpha$ -syn antibody expression was calculated using Image J software. The same threshold to  
 6 subtract background was applied to all images. Average intensity per cell was compared.  $\alpha$ -syn: total  $\alpha$ -  
 7 synuclein antibody (MJFR1, Abcam). \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

8



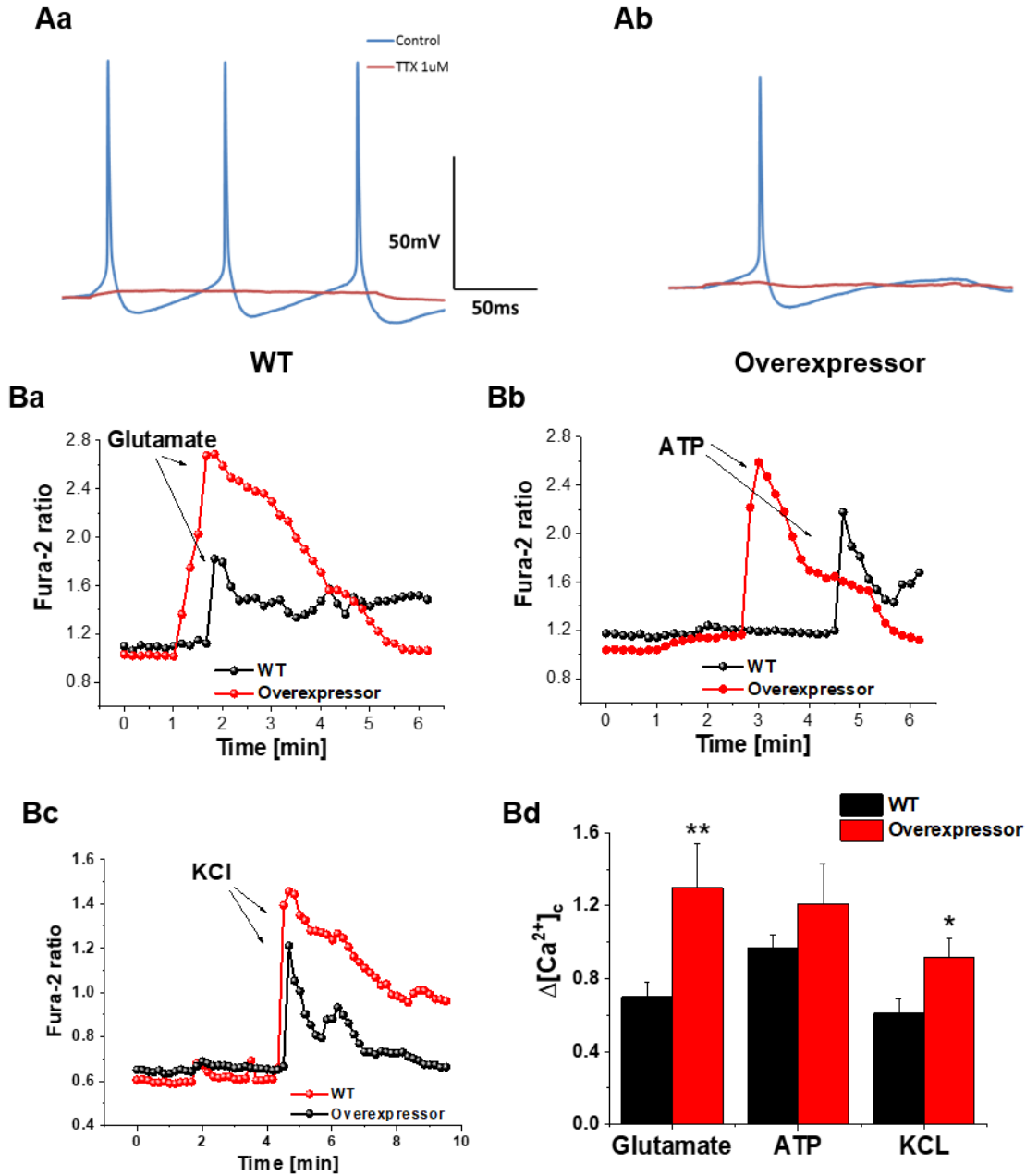
9

10 **Supplementary Figure 3. Alteration in calcium stores in iPSC-derived neurons with SNCA x3.** Cells  
 11 loaded with Fura-2 were first treated with an inhibitor of SERCA (1 $\mu$ M Thapsigargin) to deplete Ca<sup>2+</sup> from  
 12 the ER in Ca<sup>2+</sup>free medium – the change in cytosolic calcium signal in response to Thapsigargin was taken  
 13 as the ER pool. Subsequent application of ionomycin eliminates any remaining [Ca<sup>2+</sup>] gradient between  
 14 all membranes. Following Thapsigargin, the remaining gradient is largely due to the mitochondria-cytosolic  
 15 [Ca<sup>2+</sup>]. Therefore the change in cytosolic calcium following Ionomycin can be taken to represent the  
 16 mitochondrial Ca<sup>2+</sup> pool. Aa) The ER Ca<sup>2+</sup> pool in neurons with SNCA x3 was 2.9-fold smaller than in



1 control neurons ( $1.41 \pm 0.25$  Fura-2 ratio,  $n=33$  for control;  $0.51 \pm 0.03$ ,  $n=30$  for SNCA x3;  $p < 0.05$ ), in  
 2 contrast, the mitochondrial calcium pool was significantly higher ( $3.39 \pm 0.09$  Fura-2 ratio ( $n=30$ ) compared  
 3 to  $1.86 \pm 0.21$  in control ( $n=33$ );  $p < 0.05$ . Ab) The mean values of the calcium stores are shown in the  
 4 histogram (Mean  $\pm$  SEM). \* $P < 0.05$ , \*\* $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .

5



6

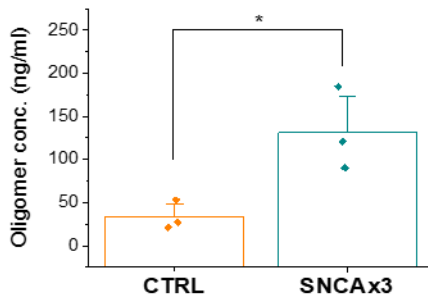
1 **Supplementary Figure 4. Abnormal calcium signaling in hES-derived neurons with overexpression**  
 2 **of  $\alpha$ -synuclein.** Both control (Aa) and  $\alpha$ -synuclein o/e (Ab) cells generated action potentials of classical  
 3 shape in response to current injection, which could be blocked by Tetrodotoxin (1 $\mu$ M TTX). B) 10 $\mu$ M  
 4 Glutamate (Ba) or 50 mM KCl (Bb) induced calcium signals in  $\alpha$ -synuclein overexpressing cells was  
 5 significantly higher than those found in control cells. Bb) Non-neuronal cells overexpressing  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
 6 demonstrated a higher ATP-induced (100 $\mu$ M ATP) calcium signal than control cells. Bd) Histogram graph  
 7 demonstrating a higher response to KCl and ATP in  $\alpha$ -synuclein overexpression cells. \* $P < 0.05$ ,  
 8 \*\* $P < 0.001$ .

9

A

Monomer Conc.	Oligomer Conc. Detected by ELISA kit
Untreated	0 nM
50 nM	0 nM
100 nM	0 nM
250 nM	0.005 nM
500 nM	0.005 nM
1 $\mu$ M	0.006 nM
2 $\mu$ M	0.006 nM

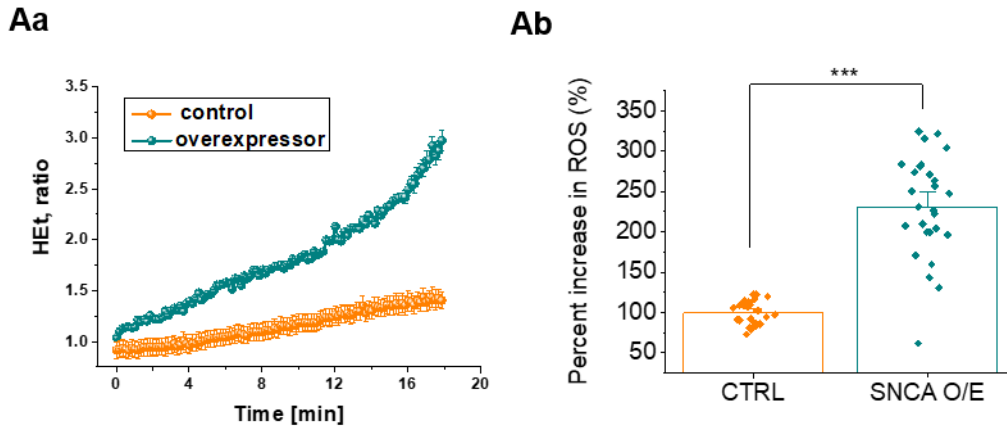
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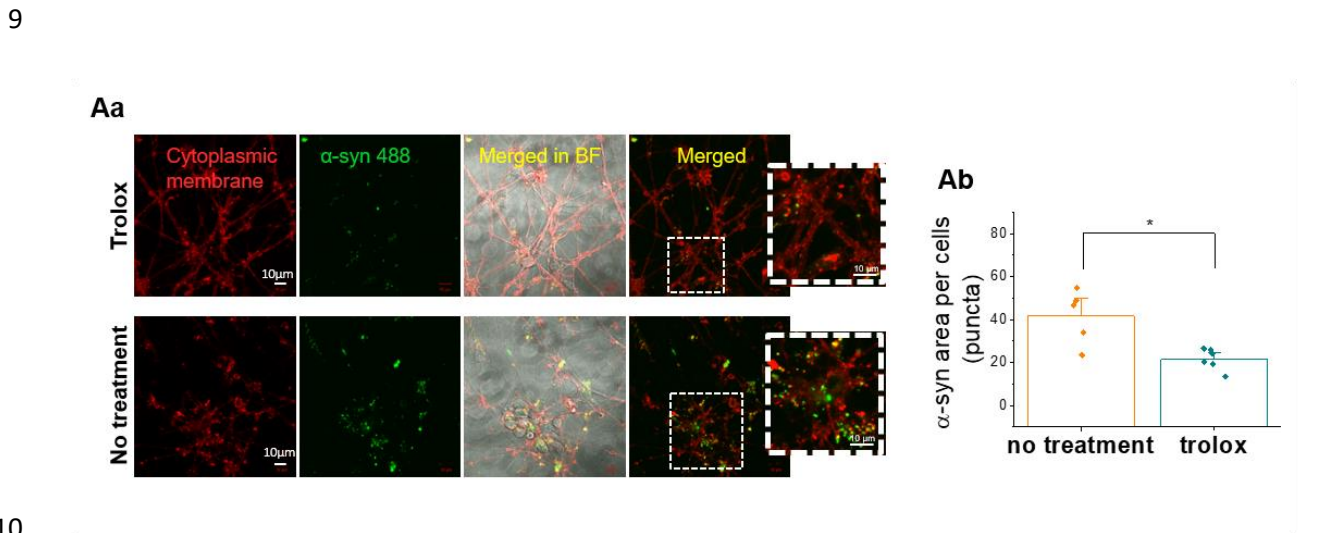
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11 **Supplementary Figure 5. Measuring  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomer concentration by ELISA.** A)  $\alpha$ -synuclein  
 12 oligomer is not detected in cells treated with a range of concentrations of human recombinant monomer

1 (50nM - 2uM) by a commercially available  $\alpha$ -synuclein oligomer ELISA kit (CSB-E18033h, Generon),  
 2 confirming its specificity for aggregates of  $\alpha$ -synuclein. B) Lysates from SNCA x3 cells have a higher  $\alpha$ -  
 3 synuclein oligomer concentration using a ELISA detecting oligomer concentration, N = 3 CTRL & SNCA  
 4 x3.



5  
 6 **Supplementary Figure 6. Abnormal ROS production in hES cells with overexpression of  $\alpha$ -synuclein.**  
 7 ROS production is higher in hES derived neurons with  $\alpha$ -synuclein overexpression (SNCA o/e) in (Aa) and  
 8 the representative trace of generation of ROS in CTRL and SNCA o/e cells in (Ab). \*\*\* $P < 0.0001$ .



10  
 11  
 12 **Supplementary Figure 7. Characterization of  $\alpha$ -synuclein – membrane interaction and uptake,**  
 13 **dependent on the oxidative status of the membrane.** Aa) Representative images of exogenous oligomeric  
 14  $\alpha$ -synuclein uptake (AF488 fluorescence, green) into the cytoplasm (membrane labelled with red) in control

1 neurons; Upper panel: AF488 uptake in control condition and Lower panel: after overnight pre-treatment  
2 with Trolox. Ab) Oligomer uptake was significantly reduced when membrane oxidation was inhibited by  
3 Trolox, N = 5 basal & Trolox. \* $P < 0.05$ .

4

**A**

Antibody name	company	species	concentration
GFAP	Abcam	Rabbit	1:500
$\beta$ tubulinIII	Abcam	Mouse	1:500
Alpha-synuclein antibody [MJFR1]	Abcam	Rabbit	1:200

**B**

Antibody name	company	species	concentration
Anti chicken 488	Abcam	Goat	1:500
Anti mouse 555	Abcam	Goat	1:500
Anti rabbit 647	Abcam	Goat	1:500

5

6 **Table 1.**

7