

## September 2019

1. Stress and its role in neurodegenerative diseases is an understudied area of research and scientists in the U.S are seeking to reduce this gap in dementia knowledge. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore conducted a study into the relationship between stress and long-term cognitive decline associated with Alzheimer's. In particular, they looked at accumulated cortisol and other stress hormones which affect the hippocampus, the area of the brain responsible for memory. Participants in the study were interviewed and their data collected over a 20 year period. Women who reported experiencing chronic stress during their life showed greater deterioration in remembering and recognising words than their peers who reported no life stressors. Traumatic life events did not appear to result in the same decline as long-term stress.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326089.php>

2. Researchers in Philadelphia claim a high fat diet, particularly one rich in animal fat and cholesterol, during pregnancy, may protect offspring against late-onset Alzheimer's disease. Previous studies have indicated that high fat diets may exacerbate changes in brain function, but the researchers looked at maternal fat intake during the gestation period in mice engineered to develop Alzheimer's. Pregnant mice were fed a high fat diet during gestation and switched to a regular diet during lactation. At 11 months of age, offspring underwent behavioural tests to assess learning ability and memory. They were found to have better learning and memory skills than their counterparts fed a regular diet during gestation.

[https://www.eurekalert.org/pub\\_releases/2019-08/tuhs-hdi082319.php](https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2019-08/tuhs-hdi082319.php)

3. Advocates for dementia care say more needs to be done to ensure quality health care for people living with dementia after two reports by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare were released. With almost 95,000 people living with dementia being admitted to hospital in 2016-17, anti-psychotic medications were dispensed 546,000 times at a cost of \$20 million. Advocates say, with our rapidly ageing population and dementia expected to increase to over 1.1 million by 2058, medication management and support for people living with dementia needs to be improved, and anti-psychotics used as last resort.

<https://www.hospitalhealth.com.au/content/aged-allied-health/news/dementia-care-anti-psychotics-a-last-resort--1254622872#axzz5y3CFTP60>

4. New research from the UK examines the link between social interaction and dementia. Researchers used data collected from over 10,000 participants aged 35-55 years (at the beginning of the study) over a period of 28 years. The analysis, that took into account gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, education, health behaviours, employment status and marital status, showed a correlation between more frequent social contact and a lower risk of developing dementia. Specifically, a person who saw friends almost every day at the age of 60, had 12% less chance of developing dementia later in life, in comparison to someone who saw friends on a less regular basis.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326064.php>

5. People with high or low haemoglobin counts have a higher risk of developing dementia, according to researchers in the Netherlands. The data (including brain scans) from over 12,000 people was studied and the researchers found that people with higher-than-normal or lower-than-normal levels of haemoglobin had a greater number of lesions in their white matter and reduced connectivity between brain areas. It is possible that, as haemoglobin carries oxygen around the body, a lower level may cause the brain to become hypoxic, leading to inflammation and cell damage. Lack of iron could also be a factor. A higher level of haemoglobin would make blood more viscous, making it harder for blood to enter smaller blood vessels, again reducing the flow of oxygen.

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/325933.php>