

February 2020

1. Results of a study conducted to determine efficacy of a possible drug treatment for Alzheimer's has revealed minimum doses of Hydromethylthionine may slow the cognitive decline associated with the disease. Hydromethylthionine, easily taken as a tablet at home, blocks abnormal aggregation of tau protein in the brain. In addition to reducing brain atrophy, the drug appeared to increase cognitive performance as much as three times more than other treatments in participants taking no more than an 8mg dose. Higher doses did not result in better cognitive scores.
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2. Researchers from Flinders University in South Australia have developed a possible vaccine for dementia, which will be trialled with human test subjects within the next two years. The vaccine's main task is to enable the immune system to recognise and remove accumulations of toxic proteins in the brain. It has been designed as both a preventative measure and a way of treating existing disease. The vaccine will be trialled predominantly in the US due to funding, but the researchers hope some trials will also occur in Australia.
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3. Researchers say a certain blood plasma (sCD14) linked to inflammation may be an early warning sign of Alzheimer's. More than 4,700 participants had blood taken at the beginning of the study in order for their plasma sCD14 levels to be measured, and were then followed over a period of 7-9 years. The researchers found that higher levels of sCD14 were associated with brain injury and ageing but also with cognitive decline. Further investigation is required to determine if the inflammatory biomarkers in the blood mirror inflammation in the brain and can accurately predict the risk of dementia in later life. [Read now >>](#)
4. According to a new study led by the University of Queensland, occupational therapy at home can be effective for people living with dementia. Occupational therapy aims to enable people to perform activities of daily living, such as showering, doing housework, going shopping or looking after their garden. Finding new ways of doing things, modifying home environments and facilitating participation means OTs can assist people to live a better quality of life. The results from 15 studies worldwide showed that both carer and person living with dementia benefitted from the support OTs provide, with reductions in stress, agitation, repetitive behaviours and other responses to unmet needs.
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5. A study from the U.K., involving over one million participants, has looked at the connection between weight, diet, inactivity and dementia in women. Between 1996 and 2017, the women gave information about their height, weight, calorie intake and physical activity, and any hospital admissions for dementia were recorded. The researchers found that, despite previous studies linking inactivity and low calorie intake with dementia risk, women who were obese (with a BMI of over 30) at the beginning of the study, regardless of calorie and activity factors during the study period, were 21% more likely in the long run to develop dementia than those who a “desirable” BMI (20-24).

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6. Researchers say there is little evidence to support claims of a link between proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) and dementia risk. Recent reports in the media have suggested PPIs (medications used to treat such conditions as reflux and peptic ulcers) increase dementia risk, causing many people to cease their prescriptions unnecessarily out of concern for their cognitive health.

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7. Scientists in the U.S. have identified a protein present in ovarian cancer that may contribute to declining brain function and Alzheimer's disease. The protein (OCIAD1), originally identified as playing a role in ovarian cancer metastasis and stem cell metabolisms, was also found in human brain cells, where it impairs neurons and causes damage to synapses, which in turn contribute to the neurodegeneration associated with Alzheimer's. Further research will be required to determine the protein's overall role and if it should be a target of possible drug treatments, in the same way tau proteins and amyloid-beta have previously been the main focus of pharmaceutical research.

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