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Alzheimer Disease and Antioxidants

By Aaron Cummings

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by: **Aaron Cummings**

At the present time, one out of ten adults have some form of Alzheimer disease. According to Dr. Greengard, Director of the Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research at the Rockefeller University, that number is expected to strike up to three times as many in the coming decades. Alzheimer's is considered a disease of the elderly and with the average lifespan of the US population rising to 74, a solution to the medical problem is being sought.

For Scientists the largest concern is what causes Alzheimer's and how can it be eradicated. For possible victims and their families it is how do we prevent the dreaded affliction or stop it in its tracks once it is diagnosed.

Scientists are in agreement and have narrowed down the contributing factor causing Alzheimer's disease. Most researchers agree that Beta-amyloid is one of the agents thought to cause damage to the brain in Alzheimer's disease. The research is attempting to find a deterrent and is recognizing antioxidants to be significant in protecting at risk patients.

According to the Harvard Medical Center, continuing research and studies are being conducted with some positive results. Even though some studies by the French point to wine as a protectant, the results are considerably controversial. The component in the wine that was indicated to be responsible for the protectant agent is still somewhat ambiguous.

Recent studies, including the study on wine, point to antioxidants for Alzheimer and Dementia risk reduction.

In an Italian study conducted by A. Russo, et.al., it was found that black grape skin extract protected cells in a test tube from oxidative damage and DNA fragmentation when exposed to beta-amyloid. An even more recent study by E. Savaskan, et.al, examined the red wine ingredient resveratrol, and found it to be neuroprotective against beta-amyloid oxidative stress, again supporting an antioxidant

mechanism.

What these studies point to is, red wine may have an effect that could provide some protection against Alzheimer's disease, but indication says it is the antioxidant factor that is the hero. This is consistent with the fact that other antioxidants, most notably vitamin E, are being studied with great interest as potential protective agents against Alzheimer's disease. According to Dr. Steve Seiner, of Harvard Medical School, "While the results of these studies do not necessarily suggest that people should drink wine in order to lower their risk of Alzheimer's disease, they do support the potential role of antioxidant treatment in preventing or delaying Alzheimer's disease.

In another study by Robert P. Friedland, MD chief of the neurogeriatrics laboratory at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, "If antioxidants prove to protect against Alzheimer's disease, it is probably because they reduce what is called 'oxidative stress' in cells." He went on to say that his team believes free radicals are the culprit of oxidative stress in cells caused by the inappropriate

consumption of some foods such as those in high fat content. In this study Friedland is recommending a "to-do" list for those who want to improve their chances of maintaining a healthy brain. He suggests:

Eat a diet high in antioxidants Eat fish Take vitamin E Take B vitamins Take folic acid Be

mentally and physically active throughout life Avoid head injuries

When addressing the reduction of free radicals it is essential to recognize the importance of Oligomeric Proanthocyanidins (OPC's) as the most powerful antioxidant known in scientific studies. OPC's are products commonly derived from a combination of grape seed extract, red wine extract and/or pine bark extract. They are very powerful bioflavonoids used as a natural food supplement ready to be absorbed into the body and begin to attack the free radicals.

OPC's are safe and have been used for over 20 years throughout Europe. Extensive studies and laboratory testing reveal no evidence for human toxicity, allergic reactions, birth defects, or carcinogenicity. OPC's work synergistically with other antioxidant vitamins, regenerating the antioxidant properties of vitamin C and vitamin E.

However, Bill Thies, PhD, vice president of medical and scientific affairs for the Alzheimer's Association says although Friedland's recommendations are probably useful and that he agrees with all of them, he wants to "be very clear that the association is not making any recommendations about ways to prevent Alzheimer's. This is, however, involved in reading and learning about all studies concerning Alzheimer's Disease.

A study conducted in Rotterdam, Netherlands, Dr. Monique Breteler with the Eras UM Medical Center, found the antioxidants beta-carotene, vitamin C, and vitamin E appear to be equally protective as a reducing factor in the fight against Alzheimer's. Her results of the 5,000 volunteers over the past 14 years, confirmed some earlier studies that point to antioxidants as a way to lower risk of dementia. She also said the protective effect of antioxidants was "more pronounced among smokers and among those who are carriers of the Alzheimer's gene."

It was also pointed out that diets rich in antioxidants are helpful, but in order to consume the necessary requirements, a person would have to triple, or more, their current consumption, which Breteler says, is most unlikely. Recommendations for proper amounts of ingestion are through antioxidant supplements including OPC's, vitamin E and vitamin C.

Editor of the OPC Antioxidant Reference Guide.

Prevention Of Alzheimer's Disease

By I Henman

Since the causes and mode of progress of Alzheimer's disease is still a riddle to experts in this field, some preventive measures at least may put a check on this distressing disorder. In course of random search, it was observed that people with a family history of Alzheimer's are prone to become victims while studies have shown that the disease may set in as a person begins to age. So, if your family tree has several black spots indicating Alzheimer's, you better be careful. Even without any family history, an aging individual should also take the following measures for prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Lifestyle changes for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease

Though difficult at the outset, lifestyle changes, change of outlook and active mental and physical routine are supposed to render help in prevention of Alzheimer's disease. To begin with, let us see how mental stimulation may assist in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Health studies conducted on nuns revealed that those who participated regularly in intellectual pursuits were less likely to contract Alzheimer's. Further studies also proved that a mere brainwave might not put a stringent check on Alzheimer's altogether, but it certainly delayed the onset and the progression of the symptoms that are no less distressing. So, for prevention of Alzheimer's disease one could just about read adventure stories, travel literature, sci-fi stories or do Crossword puzzles, play chess or scrabble.

Physical activity

Recent studies have shown that apart from mental stimulation, certain forms of physical activity may come of assistance for the prevention of Alzheimer's disease. Since the actual causes are unknown, it is believed that physical activity promotes increased blood flow, heart and lung capacity, etc and the combined effect should prevent Alzheimer's disease. However, physical activity need not necessarily be rigorous. Regular daily walk or swim, if possible or a game of golf or better still, any outdoor activity with small children may delay the onset of the disease.

Social Interaction

As people age, they tend to avoid social activity, preferring a solitary existence. However, studies have shown that aversion to social interaction prevents release of certain hormones necessary to build up immunity in human being. So, maintaining a social network, visiting friends and relations, attending

parties, etc may help in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Diet

Though no definite diet plan has yet been introduced for patients suffering fro Alzheimer's, it is generally believed that diet recommended for cardiovascular diseases is also good for Alzheimer's. Besides, experts studying in preventive medicine have indicated that antioxidants like vitamin C and E and fish oil play a fairly important role in the prevention of Alzheimer's disease. In any event, such diet will do more good than harm to any individual, especially when he or she is aging.

Please note that this article is for educational purposes only, consult your family doctor or a medical expert before ever trying any remedy or treatment for a disease such as alzheimers.

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