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Alzheimer's Toxin May Be Key To Slowing Disease

By Baron Grove

Australian scientists say they have identified a toxin which plays a key role in the onset of

Alzheimer's, raising hope that a drug targeting the toxin could be developed to slow the degenerative brain disease.

The toxin, called quinolinic acid, kills nerve cells in the brain, leading to dysfunction and death, the scientists said.

"Quinolinic acid may not be the cause of Alzheimer's disease, but it plays a key role in its progression," Alzheimer's researcher Dr Karen Cullen from the University of Sydney said in a statement. "It's the smoking gun, if you like."

"While we won't be able to prevent people from getting Alzheimer's disease, we may eventually, with the use of drugs, be able to slow down the progression."

Alzheimer's is a brain-destroying disease that affects millions of people around the world. As the population gets steadily older, experts estimate numbers will balloon to as many as 16 million in the United States alone by 2015.

More than 200,000 people have Alzheimer's disease in Australia and the number is expected to rise to 730,000 by 2050.

Outward symptoms start with memory loss, which progresses to complete helplessness as brain cells are destroyed. In the brain, neurons die as messy plaques and tangles of protein form.

The Alzheimer's research team from Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital, the University of Sydney and Japan's Hokkaido University found quinolinic acid neurotoxicity in the brains of dementia patients.

Quinolinic acid is part of a biochemical pathway called the kynurenine pathway which is also found in other brain disorders, including Huntington's disease and schizophrenia.

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The scientists said there were several drugs in an advanced stage of development for other conditions which targeted this pathway and that these drugs, which still need to be tested, could be used to complement other treatments for Alzheimer's.

Baron Grove

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Nutrition Research on Alzheimer's Disease and Brain Health

By News Canada

(NC)—Recent research has shown a benefit of certain nutrients in reducing the risk of degenerative diseases of the brain. Antioxidants, such as vitamins E, C, B12 and folic acid have been shown to play an important role in healthy brain functioning. Antioxidants, often found in fruits and vegetables, have also been associated with improved mental function, including memory. Vitamin B12 and folic acid may also have beneficial effects on overall cognitive abilities.

Alzheimer's Disease is a degenerative brain disease that can cause a person to forget recent events or familiar tasks. Recent research has shown that a diet rich in antioxidants, such as fruits and vegetables, may protect against Alzheimer's disease and slow the progression of the disease in people already diagnosed with Alzheimer's. It is believed that people with low levels of folate and vitamin B12 in their blood may be at a higher risk of Alzheimer's Disease.

Those who find it hard to incorporate a range of healthy foods into their diet should consider taking a daily multivitamin. A good multivitamin/mineral supplement, such as Centrum®, which includes vitamins C, B6, E, D, folic acid and minerals such as iron, zinc and selenium, could improve mental functioning and help delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

For more information on supplementation, visit www.centrumvitamins.ca.

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