

Drug shows promise in reducing tangles

A drug that aims to reduce tangles in the brain of people with Alzheimer's disease appears promising in early trials.

In results announced at the Alzheimer's Association's International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease in Chicago, researchers said the drug, known as MTC (Rember), stabilized the progression of Alzheimer's over 50 weeks.

"The data show an 82 percent of reduction

in the rate which the disease progresses," said lead study author Claude M. Wischik, mental health professor at the University of Aberdeen in the United Kingdom and chairman of TauRX Therapeutics.

Tangles are made up of a protein called tau and develop inside nerve cells. This potential treatment is the first to focus on tangles rather than beta-amyloid, which forms sticky clumps outside of brain cells-as the culprit in Alzheimer's disease.

The main chemical in Rember, methylene blue, has been used in a different formulation since the 1930s as a treatment for chronic bladder infections. However it predates the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and has never been fully studied for safety and effectiveness, and not in the form used in the Alzheimer's study.

Experts also caution that while the results are encouraging, Rember is still several years from being available.

International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease Highlights new research

The Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease (ICAD) was held July 26th through July 31st in Chicago. Nearly 5,400 of the world's Alzheimer's researchers convened here to discuss the latest on the disease.

This year there was an unprecedented number of Phase II and Phase III drug results that were presented. Also, the nature of focus of the trials was very diverse. There

were reports of several anti-amyloid compounds, as well as a number of drugs focused on tau, and a clinical trial focused on a nutritional product that may be beneficial in Alzheimer's.

Scientists also reported the latest findings in early detection, risk factors and how communication techniques may have an effect on the progression of the disease.

Although the field is progressing so that we

will soon see changes in Alzheimer's disease diagnosis, care, treatment and eventually prevention, we still need more research money now to be able to capitalize on the progress we've made in the last decade.

For more information on ideas presented at ICAD 2008, please visit: http://www.alz.org/icad/press_room.asp or contact us at 800.272.3900, 319.294.9699.

Marriage may help reduce the risk of dementia

A recent study found that unmarried, middle-aged people are more likely to develop cognitive impairment than married people of the same age.

In the Swedish study, the results of which were presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease in Chicago, over 1,400 Finnish people were questioned in midlife and then again in 1998, an average of 21 years later. Almost 10 percent were diagnosed with some form of cognitive impairment in

1998, with 48 diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

Researchers adjusted their figures to take into account weight, physical activity and education, and participants with partners still had a 50 percent lower risk of showing signs of impairment later in life than those who lived alone. Those who stayed single had a doubled risk of dementia, while those who were divorced from midlife onward had triple the risk.

The reasons behind the results weren't entirely clear, but study author Krister Hakanson of the Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm said, "Cognitive and intellectual stimulation has been reported to be protective against dementia in general. Living in a couple means you are confronted with other ideas, perspectives and needs. You have to compromise, make decisions and solve problems together with someone else, which is more complicated and challenging.

Staying social may ward off Alzheimer's

An active social life may be the key to a healthy mind in old age, a recent study of women suggests.

The study found that women with larger social networks reduced their risk of getting dementia by 26 percent.

Researchers tested more than 2,200 women aged 78 or older by phone and also reviewed their medical records. The women were asked about social interactions with a spouse and/or other family members and friends, including how many people they interacted with and how often.

Dr. William Thies, Alzheimer's Association Vice President of Medical and Scientific Relations, said the finding "fit with a large

body of evidence that being isolated is bad for you."

He added however, "You don't know whether the bigger network prevents Alzheimer's or [whether] people who don't get Alzheimer's maintain bigger networks."

Another recent study reported that leisure activities that combine physical, mental and social activity are the most likely to prevent dementia.

In the study of 800 men and women aged 75 and older, those who were more physically active, more mentally active or more socially engaged had a lower risk of developing dementia. And those who combined these activities did even better.

Other research has found that sports, cultural activities, emotional support and close personal relationships together appear to have a protective effect against dementia.

Ways to stay socially engaged in activities that stimulate the mind and body include:
-staying active in the workplace
-volunteering in community groups and causes.
-joining bridge clubs, square dancing clubs or other social groups
-traveling

For more information about how your brain can benefit by remaining socially active, visit www.alz.org/we_can_help_brain_health_maintain_your_brain.asp

Alzheimer's Association marks National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month with new resources

November 1st marks the 25th anniversary of President Reagan declaring November National Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month. This year the Association will launch new resources to help relieve caregiver stress.

While serving as a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's disease can be rewarding, the stress that comes with it is inevitable. Caregiving can cause a mental drain (often resulting in depression, anger and irritability) and a physical toll (exhaustion, sleeplessness, etc.) that are real issues you shouldn't ignore.

Additionally, caregivers for someone with Alzheimer's or another dementia are more likely than non-caregivers to report that their health is fair or poor.

The new resources to help relieve this stress include:

-Caregiver Stress Check, a first-of-its-kind, interactive quiz that helps caregivers identify their symptoms of stress and provides them with a tailored list of helpful referrals and resources. Check out the quiz starting November 1 at www.alz.org.

-Two new, best-in-class, topical videos for caregivers and people with dementia: 1) "Understanding Alzheimer's: An introductory guide for people with dementia and their caregivers" and 2) "Alzheimer's and Safety: A guide to planning and prepara-

tion". Aimed at increasing understanding, building skills and empowering people with dementia and those in their circle of care, these leading videos feature essential information on dementia basics, care, home and transportation safely delivered by individuals with dementia, family caregivers, physicians and care experts. Videos will be offered in DVD format at www.alz.org beginning November 1 and through local Alzheimer's Association Chapters nationwide.

In addition, Alzheimer's Association CareSource™ is an easy-to-use, one-stop online resource for everything you need to find and plan for care for a person with Alzheimer's, including:

-Lotsa Helping Hands, an interactive calendar that allows anyone involved in care or support to organize caregiving activities.
-Alzheimer's Association Senior Housing FinderSM -Powered by SNAPforSeniors® Senior Housing Finder is the first online nationwide database for locating dementia care.
-Alzheimer's Association CareFinder™, which helps identify dementia care options to best meet an individual's needs and preferences.

Learn more about caregiver stress and all of the helpful resources available to you by visiting www.alz.org

East Central Iowa Chapter welcomes new staff member

The East Central Iowa Chapter is pleased to announce a new staff member that has recently joined our team. Elizabeth Schlehuder joined the Chapter in July as Marketing and Communications Coordinator and will oversee all Chapter communications and marketing materials, including the quarterly newsletter, media releases and 3rd party events. Elizabeth earned her BA in Communication Studies and a minor in Human Relations from the University of Iowa.



Elizabeth Schlehuder

Caregiver Tip for Holidays

Discuss holiday celebrations with relatives and close friends. Make sure that family members and friends understand the situation and have realistic expectations. By discussing past celebrations, you may be able to agree on how you'll handle upcoming holidays.

Silver Alert System in development

Six out of 10 people with Alzheimer's disease will wander from their homes or caregiving facilities. If they are not found within 24 hours, up to half will suffer serious injury or death. Because of these statistics the Alzheimer's Association support acts of legislation that would enable a system called "Silver Alert." "Silver Alert" would provide families a way to locate lost or missing seniors who may be endangered.

"Silver Alert" would be similar to "Amber Alert" in the sense that they both are looking for the safe return of an individual to their family. There are still distinct differences between the two. Amber Alert is a well established, federally funded program that involves searching for a minor who has not wandered off, but has been abducted. This usually calls for an immediate and broad response. Silver Alert involves vulnerable adults who wandered off by themselves. Ninety five percent of people with Alzheimer's disease who wander are found just over a mile from their place of residence or last location seen, thus the search techniques necessary to locate them are very different from those required with an Amber Alert.

The Alzheimer's Association is looking to authorize grants for law enforcement dementia training, which would contain a wandering prevention component. It would also coordinate efforts between families, caregivers and local authorities.

Silver Alert would have to be interoperable with existing programs such as MedicAlert + Alzheimer's Association Safe Return Program. By being interoperable with existing programs Silver Alert will also enhance them to be more successful.

As of June 2008, there are nine states that have enacted Silver Alert legislation: Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, N. Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Texas, and Virginia, but not all of them have launched their Silver Alert systems. Silver Alert legislation is pending in several other states.

As the threat of Alzheimer's disease continues to touch more people's lives, the safety and security of those with Alzheimer's disease or dementia related illnesses will continue to be a tremendous concern for all of us. Silver Alert, when enacted, will provide ease of mind needed for family members and friends.