

Research in the News

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1. Research into dementia in dogs may lead to treatments for people living with the condition, experts say. The trial, which began in 2014, involves implanting stem cells from the dogs' skin into their hippocampus. Within a short space of time, the dogs appeared to regain some of their normal cognitive abilities and showed a reduction in anxious or confused behaviours, such as pacing or forgetting where to go to the toilet. The researchers believe the treatment could also work in people, because of the similarities between human and canine brains.
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2. The recently-released World Alzheimer's Report, surveying almost 70,000 people across 155 countries, reveals almost 80% of the general public are concerned about developing dementia at some point, whilst 35% of carers said they have hidden the diagnosis of dementia of a family member. Almost 62% of healthcare providers worldwide think that dementia is a normal part of ageing, and 40% of the general public believe medical professionals ignore people with dementia. The report provides recommendations for governments, agencies, civil society, policy-makers and local governments, to improve the experiences of people living with dementia across the globe.
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3. A test to detect the risk of developing a form of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI - which may lead to Alzheimer's disease) is the focus of a new study conducted by researchers in the UK. The test tracks eye movements; people with Alzheimer's often show signs of eye movement impairment, e.g. the inability to direct their gaze in the appropriate direction when movement is detected, even before other cognitive symptoms appear. Analysis of the test results showed it was possible to distinguish between types of MCI, and that the participants with aMCI – amnesiac mild cognitive impairment – has scores closely resembling those with full-blown Alzheimer's.
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4. New research suggests that people who suffer from migraines may have a three to four times higher risk of developing Alzheimer's, with women particularly at risk. The study, which analysed data collected from over 600 community-dwelling participants, looked at other factors that might link the two conditions, such as high blood pressure or diabetes. Even after adjustment for these variables, the researchers found that migraines were much more common in people living with dementia than in those without.
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5. Abnormal liver function is being linked to Alzheimer's disease in findings published in *JAMA Network Open*. The study, conducted by researchers from Duke University and Indiana University, compared the relationship between altered levels of liver enzymes and diagnosis of Alzheimer's. Abnormal levels were associated with increased levels of amyloid in the brain and correlated with memory loss and cognitive impairment in those with the disease, and were seemingly linked to reduced glucose metabolism and shrinkage in the hippocampus.
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6. An in-home treatment device for Alzheimer's disease is being trialled by NeuroEM Therapeutics in the U.S. with interesting results. The device, named TEMT (Transcranial Electromagnetic Treatment) uses electromagnetic waves to break up accumulations of amyloid-beta and tau proteins. After 2 months using TEMT at home, participants showed no negative effects on behaviour or physiology and, importantly, showed improvements in cognitive performance, seemingly reversing memory loss and restoring it to a level experienced a year earlier. Benefits were also experienced even after the treatment ceased. All participants were offered, and accepted, an extension of the trial, which will be ongoing.
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