Diabetes and depression linked to progression from mild cognitive impairment to dementia

Friday 20 February, 2015

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People with Mild Cognitive Impairment who have diabetes, depression, or low levels of vitamin B12 are at an increased risk of progressing to dementia, according to research published in the American Journal of Psychiatry today (20 February 2015).

Academics led by Professor Gill Livingston at University College London conducted a systematic review of 62 research studies looking at the rates of conversion to dementia in almost 16,000 people with (Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI). Amongst the factors investigated, the study revealed that:

- Diabetes significantly increases the risk of progression from MCI to dementia
- Those with symptoms of depression are more likely to covert from MCI to dementia
- Heavy alcohol use predicts greater likelihood of progressing from MCI to dementia but the evidence looking at moderate alcohol use was inconsistent
- Following a Mediterranean diet decreases the risk of developing dementia in people with MCI
- Lower vitamin B12 levels predicted a greater risk of conversion from MCI to dementia

Alzheimer's Society comment:

Dr Clare Walton, Research Manager at Alzheimer's Society said:

'Dementia isn't a natural part of ageing, but for those with mild memory problems it can be hugely stressful not knowing whether they are experiencing normal age-related changes or the start of something more serious. This comprehensive study involving data from almost 16,000 people helps us begin to predict when mild memory problems are more likely to develop into dementia and, more importantly, suggest lifestyle changes that people can make to potentially lower their risk of developing the condition.

'The findings suggest that diabetes and low levels of vitamin B12 are associated with an increased risk of mild memory problems developing into dementia. While there's currently no cure, we know that the best way to reduce your dementia risk is to eat a Mediterranean diet rich in oily fish and vegetables, keep physically active, not smoke and have your blood pressure regularly checked.'

- Ends –

Research reference: Livingston et al, (2014). Modifiable predictors of Dementia in Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Systematic Review and Meta Analysis. Published in American Journal of Psychiatry on Friday 20 February 2015.

Notes to editors:

225,000 will develop dementia this year, that's one every three minutes

Alzheimer's Society research shows that 850,000 people in the UK have a form of dementia. In less than ten years a million people will be living with dementia. This will soar to two million people by 2051

Dementia costs the UK economy over £26 Billion per year. This is the equivalent of more than £30,000 per person with dementia.

Alzheimer's Society champions the rights of people living with dementia and the millions of people who care for them

Alzheimer's Society works in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Alzheimer's Society supports people to live well with dementia today and funds research to find a cure for tomorrow. We rely on voluntary donations to continue our vital work. You can donate now by calling 0845 306 0898 or visiting alzheimers.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society provides a National Dementia Helpline, the number is 0300 222 11 22 or visit alzheimers.org.uk

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