Gene study sheds light on memory power and performance

Wednesday 26 November, 2014

Researchers led by the University of Edinburgh have discovered people with gene variants are more likely to have memory problems even if they are cognitively healthy according to research published today (26 November 2014).

The Cohorts for Heart and Aging Research in Genomic Epidemiology (CHARGE) Constortium, which includes experts at the University of Edinburgh, analysed data from 30,000 people, aged more than 45 years old.

The participants' – none of whom had dementia – took memory tests that included recalling set words and stories after assigned time period. Researchers then analysed the results alongside details of each person's genome to identify genetic variants or changes associated with lower memory scores. People with lower scores overall were found to have variants near a gene called Apolipoprotein E and another gene involved in immune response.

Alzheimer's Society comment:

Jess Smith, Research Officer at Alzheimer's Society:

'We've long known that variations in the gene APOE affect the likelihood that someone will develop Alzheimer's disease. This interesting study suggests that variations in nearby genes could also play a part in memory even in those who are otherwise cognitively healthy.

Rather than using information like this to predict people's risk of developing dementia, these findings could be helpful in working out how the brain ages and help us to understand more about the development of dementia.'

- Ends -

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 will have a form of dementia by 2015. 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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