

Health NEWS & NOTES

New Type Of Alzheimer's Medicine May Treat Underlying Cause Of The Disease

(NAPSA)—Researchers are looking at new medicines that may treat the underlying cause of Alzheimer's disease. Currently, the most frequently prescribed Alzheimer's disease treatments provide temporary relief of symptoms but do not prevent the disease from getting worse.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, affecting 4.5 million people in the United States. It is a progressive brain disorder that gradually destroys a person's memory and ability to learn, make judgments, communicate and carry out daily activities.

Some of the new Alzheimer's disease medicines are believed to work by targeting a toxic form of a protein called beta-amyloid. Scientists hypothesize that a build-up of beta-amyloid causes the formation of plaques in the brain that prevent the brain from functioning properly. Beta-amyloid is also thought to cause brain cell death in people with Alzheimer's disease.

Doctors are testing a new medicine that may lower the levels of beta-amyloid in people with Alzheimer's disease. In earlier clinical trials, this medicine reduced the rate of cognitive decline by 36 percent in patients with mild Alzheimer's disease. Now the medicine is being widely studied across the country.

The greatest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is increasing age. Twenty five percent of the population over 75 is affected and for those over 85 the risk is nearly 50 percent. Common symptoms include a gradual loss of memory,



problems with reasoning or judgment, disorientation, difficulty in learning, loss of language skills and a decline in the ability to perform routine tasks.

There is no single test to diagnose Alzheimer's disease. Instead, the diagnosis is made by taking a detailed history of an individual and weighing the results of several tests, including a complete physical and neurological examination, a psychiatric assessment and lab tests. Once these tests are completed, a diagnosis of "probable" Alzheimer's disease can be made by elimination of other possible causes of the symptoms.

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's. Some treatments can temporarily improve the symptoms associated with cognitive loss, providing a boost to memory and understanding. Unfortunately, they do nothing to slow the progression of the underlying disease and as the loss of memory and understanding continues, the individual is soon back on the same course.

More information about the clinical trial may be obtained by calling 1-888-788-3956 or visiting www.myriad.com.