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RESEARCH ADVANCES AT THE ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

- **GLP-1 DRUG MAY PROTECT AGAINST DEMENTIA**
- **WILDFIRE SMOKE AND PROCESSED RED MEAT RAISE RISK**
- **BLOOD TESTS COULD IMPROVE EARLY DIAGNOSIS
& SPEED ACCESS TO TREATMENT**

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 1, 2024 — New research results reported at the [Alzheimer's Association International Conference](#)® 2024 (AAIC®) are advancing what we know about risk, diagnosis and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. Highlights include:

- Phase 2b clinical trial results of a GLP-1 agonist drug suggest it can protect against brain shrinkage associated with dementia.
- Breathing wildfire smoke and eating too much processed meat are bad for brain health and may raise the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.
- Some new Alzheimer's blood tests are highly accurate and may improve recruiting for treatment trials and speed access to approved treatments.

AAIC is the premier annual conference for presentation and discussion of the latest Alzheimer's and dementia research. This year's conference in Philadelphia attracted nearly 14,000 registered attendees and included more than 5,260 scientific submissions.

GLP-1 Drug May Protect the Brain

Liraglutide, a glucagon-like peptide drug (GLP-1), appears to [protect the brain from shrinkage and slow cognitive decline](#), according to Phase 2b clinical trial results presented for the first time at AAIC 2024. GLP-1 agonists — like Ozempic and Zepbound — have been shown to help with diabetes and weight loss and reduce the risk of heart disease. The new research suggests they may also protect the brain.

The trial was led by researchers at the Imperial College, London, and included 204 patients living with Alzheimer's who had a daily injection for one year: half received up to 1.8 mg of liraglutide and half received a placebo. The drug appeared to reduce shrinking in the parts of the brain that control memory, learning, language and decision-making by nearly 50% compared to placebo. People in the study who received liraglutide had slower decline in cognitive function after one year compared to those who received the placebo.

Wildfire Smoke Riskier for Brain than Other Types of Air Pollution

[Exposure to wildfire smoke may raise the risk of being diagnosed with dementia](#), according to a 10-year study of more than 1.2 million Californians, which was reported for the first time at AAIC 2024. Researchers determined the risk of dementia is notably stronger from wildfire smoke than from other sources of fine particulate matter air pollution (PM_{2.5}), such as motor vehicles and factories.

Researchers analyzed health records from more than 1.2 million socioeconomically diverse Kaiser Permanente Southern California members 60 or older. None of the members had been diagnosed with dementia at the beginning of the study. Researchers found an increased risk of dementia diagnosis due to wildfire PM_{2.5} exposure. The risk of dementia was higher due to wildfire smoke, even with less exposure, than other sources of PM_{2.5}. This is a serious problem, as air pollution produced by wildfires now accounts for more than 70% of total fine particulate matter exposure on poor air quality days in California.

Processed Red Meat May Raise Risk of Dementia; Swapping it for Nuts or Beans May Lower It

People who eat about two servings a week of [processed red meat have a 14% higher risk of dementia](#) than those who eat less than about three servings a month, according to research reported for the first time at AAIC 2024. It also showed that replacing one serving of processed red meat every day with one serving of nuts and legumes can lower the risk of dementia by about 20%. Examples of processed red meat include bacon, hot dogs and sausage.

The research from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, analyzed findings from more than 130,000 participants in the Nurses' Health Study and Health Professionals Follow-Up Study tracked for up to 43 years. They based their findings on the participants' answers to food-frequency questionnaires. Each additional daily serving of processed red meat was linked to an extra 1.6 years of cognitive aging for global cognition, and an extra 1.7 years of cognitive aging in verbal memory.

Blood Tests May Revolutionize Accuracy of Alzheimer's Disease Diagnosis

Blood tests for Alzheimer's disease are moving closer to use in physicians' offices. [Research reported at AAIC 2024](#) suggests some of them (once confirmed) may make diagnoses much more accurate, support recruiting for future clinical trials, and help people get diagnosed and treated more quickly. Blood tests that assess phosphorylated tau (p-tau) protein to identify Alzheimer's-related changes in the brain show the most promise.

One study from Lund University, Sweden, included 1,213 patients who were tested with the PrecivityAD2 test, and found it significantly outperformed clinicians who were not using a blood test. The test was about 90% accurate at identifying Alzheimer's, while specialists at memory clinics were 73% accurate and primary care doctors were 63% accurate.

Findings of another study combining 2,718 cognitively unimpaired participants from 10 different studies suggest that levels of a marker called p-tau217 in plasma alone may be sufficient to select cognitively unimpaired amyloid-positive participants for clinical trials. A third study that used a forecasting model suggests that the use of high-performing blood tests in primary care could drastically reduce average wait times for Alzheimer's diagnosis and treatment from nearly six years to less than six months.

About the Alzheimer's Association International Conference® (AAIC®)

The Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC) is the world's largest gathering of researchers from around the world focused on Alzheimer's and other dementias. As a part of the Alzheimer's Association's research program, AAIC serves as a catalyst for generating new knowledge about dementia and fostering a vital, collegial research community.

AAIC 2024 home page: www.alz.org/aaic/

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About the Alzheimer's Association®

The Alzheimer's Association is a worldwide voluntary health organization dedicated to Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. Visit alz.org or call 800.272.3900.

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