

News from the American Psychiatric Association:

April 29, 2010

NIH Panel Says There Are No Known Preventive Measures To Stop Onset Of Alzheimer's.

[NBC Nightly News](#) (4/28, story 9, 2:10, Williams) reported that "finding a way to prevent" Alzheimer's "disease would be medicine's so-called Holy Grail. Which is why today's news from the National Institutes of Health was so disappointing to so many people."

The [CBS Evening News](#) (4/28, story 5, 1:50, Couric) reported that "with no cure yet for Alzheimer's disease, the focus has been on what we can do to try to prevent it or at least slow it down."

On its website, [CBS News](#) (4/28, Andrews) reported that, according to an expert panel from the National Institutes of Health, "there are, as of yet, no known preventive measures which can effectively halt the onset of Alzheimer's disease." In particular, "the panel was especially tough on supplements like ginkgo biloba or fish oil -- with one panelist calling them garbage, and the others saying they just don't work." The Alzheimer's Association, however, points out that "most current research does link heart disease and hypertension with the increased risk of Alzheimer's." Maria Carrillo, of the Alzheimer's Association stated, "Reduction of your risk of heart disease in middle life, even in late life, can help you reduce your risk of cognitive decline."

[CQ HealthBeat](#) (4/29) quotes an NIH [press release](#) (pdf), which said, "The panel found that certain chronic diseases, such as diabetes and depression, and risk factors, such as smoking, are associated with increased risk of both Alzheimer's disease and cognitive decline." But, "studies have not yet demonstrated that these medical or lifestyle factors actually cause or prevent Alzheimer's disease or cognitive decline, only that they are related," the statement cautioned.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (4/28, Roan) "Booster Shots" blog reported, "The panel's findings, while disheartening, are aimed at being straightforward with Americans, who may spend large amounts of money on cognitive enhancement or may even be persuaded to use products or practices that could be harmful." Instead, "consumers should discuss prevention strategies with their doctors in order to protect against taking any substances that might be harmful to their health, the panelists urged." [Reuters](#) (4/29, Fox) and [WebMD](#) (4/28) also covered the story.

May 5, 2010

Wandering Alzheimer's Victims Increasingly Becoming Focus Of Search-And-Rescue Operations.

On its front page, the [New York Times](#) (5/5, A1, Johnson) reports, "About six in 10 dementia victims will wander at least once, healthcare statistics show, and the numbers are growing worldwide, fueled primarily by Alzheimer's disease." The "rising numbers of searches are driving a need to retrain emergency workers, police officers, and volunteers around the country who say they throw out just about every generally accepted idea when hunting" for Alzheimer's sufferers. Retired FBI agent Robert B. Schaefer, who now conducts training sessions for the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services, recently told a class that "a dementia wanderer will sometimes take evasive action to avoid detection, especially if the disease has made them paranoid about authority figures."

Technology Helps Caregivers Look After Sufferers of Alzheimer's, Dementia. The [New York Times](#) (5/5, A3, Johnson) reports, "Companies that make GPS devices are also starting to enter the growing Alzheimer's market with products that look like wristwatches, and even shoes with GPS monitors embedded in the heels. ... Lower on the technology scale, but widespread in its use around the nation, is radio frequency tracking." A nonprofit organization, Project Lifesaver, "equips Alzheimer's sufferers with wristbands," and "contracts with local government agencies to set up the service."

May 13, 2010

Scientists Pinpoint Two Genes Associated With Alzheimer's.

The [Los Angeles Times](#) (5/11, Roan) "Booster Shots" blog reported that, according to a [study](#) published in the May 12 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, scientists "identified several genes linked to" Alzheimer's "disease, but found that knowledge of these genes and their location on chromosomes did not improve their ability to predict who would develop" the condition. However, "the knowledge of genes related to the disease could...help with research into what causes it, the researchers concluded."

[HealthDay](#) (5/11, Reinberg) reported that in addition to the APOE gene, which is already known to increase the risk for Alzheimer's, "scientists have pinpointed two genes that are linked to" the condition. Studying "3,006 people with Alzheimer's and 14,642 people without the disease," researchers "identified two...genes associated with Alzheimer's disease, located on chromosomes 2 and 19. The first gene was close to a gene called BIN1 on chromosome 2 and the second was close to several genes, including EXOC3L2, BLOC1S3, and MARK4 on chromosome 19, the" investigators found. [AFP](#) (5/12) also covers the story.