

Education -- the best pill of all for preventing Alzheimer's?

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A study published in PLoS ONE today addresses the impact of neuroprotection on Alzheimer's disease.

Remarkably, the study shows that even very modest neuroprotective effects at the cellular level can lead to dramatic reductions in the number of cases of Alzheimer's.

Based on data derived from 26 epidemiological studies worldwide (comprising over 60,000 subjects), Dr de la Fuente-Fernandez developed a simple mathematical model that will allow researchers to test the effect of new neuroprotective drugs.

Perhaps not too surprisingly, the study suggests however that the most effective neuroprotective therapy for Alzheimer's disease may well not be a pill, but education and intellectual activity. Mounting evidence accumulated over the last few years supports the notion that intellectual activity increases what neuroscientists call "the cognitive reserve".

According to the model, a mere 5% increase in the cognitive reserve in the general population would prevent one third of Alzheimer's cases.

Dr de la Fuente-Fernandez, a neurologist at the Hospital A. Marcide in Ferrol (Spain), points out that public health policies aimed at implementing higher levels of education in the general population are likely the best strategy for preventing Alzheimer's disease.

Source: Public Library of Science

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