

Why sufferers from Alzheimer's disease might have lower blood pressure

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A new study (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bihy.2008.04.006>) published in *Bioscience Hypotheses* (<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/issn/1756-2392>), a recently launched Elsevier journal, proposes that some people suffering from Alzheimer's disease experience a reduction in their high blood pressure because of cognitive decline.

Publications relating to dementia and blood pressure have been reviewed by the paper's author Dr Sven Kurbel of the Osijek Medical Faculty in Croatia. The cognitive problems suffered by some Alzheimer's patients have previously been put down to low blood pressure (arterial hypotension). The hypothesis put forward by Dr Kurbel is that the opposite is true. He suggests that as the patient's memory fails, they forget the causes of anxiety and worry that was causing high blood pressure: failing memory causes hypotension, not visa versa.

Hypertension itself is a cause of disease, including strokes, so paradoxically, Dr. Kurbel's hypothesis suggests, treatments which alleviate memory loss could affect other causes of illness. If this hypothesis is correct it could have a significant effect on the treatment of conditions such as metabolic syndrome, which involves increased weight and high blood pressure. Dr. Kurbel concludes that "An important question is would reduction of stressful memories and of stress exposure in everyday life help diminish the risk of getting hypertension or metabolic syndrome in the years to come."

If confirmed by further studies, this will affect how doctors treat the

elderly, helping to target drugs more effectively and reduce risks of strokes and heart attack. It also suggests that heart disease could be substantially reduced in old people simply by making them happier about themselves and their lives.

Dr. William Bains, editor of Bioscience Hypotheses, said "This is a fascinating piece of lateral thinking, one with real health implications, and just the sort of stimulating, practical idea that we hoped Bioscience Hypotheses would be able to publish for other scientists to think about"

Source: Elsevier

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