

Immunotherapy linked to lower risk of Alzheimer's disease

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IVIg treatments, the addition of good antibodies into the blood stream, may hold promise for lowering the risk of Alzheimer's disease and other similar brain disorders, according to research published in the July 21, 2009, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"In our study, we looked at the association of the use of intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) with the occurrence of Alzheimer's disease. IVIg has been used safely for more than 20 years to treat other diseases but is thought to have an indirect effect on Alzheimer's disease by targeting beta-amyloid, or plaques in the brain," said Howard Fillit, MD, with the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York.

For the study, researchers analyzed the medical records of 847 people given at least one treatment of IVIg over four years and 84,700 who were not given IVIg treatment. Participants were treated for [immune deficiencies](#), leukemia or other types of cancer, anemia and other diseases. The records were pulled from a database of 20 million patients age 65 or older developed by SDI Health. Scientists made sure the groups were similar in their risk factors for Alzheimer's disease.

The study found that people who received IVIg for other conditions had a 42-percent lower risk of developing Alzheimer's disease over four years compared to those who did not receive IVIg. Only 2.8 percent of those treated with IVIg developed Alzheimer's disease compared with 4.8 percent of those not treated with immune-based therapy.

"Our study provides evidence that previous IVIg treatments may protect against Alzheimer's disease," said Fillit. "The current Alzheimer's drugs on the market treat the symptoms of the disease. Immunization could treat the underlying cause."

"These findings do not constitute an endorsement of IVIg treatment for [Alzheimer's disease](#). A large scale clinical trial is underway to determine whether IVIg could be an effective treatment for Alzheimer's," researchers said.

Source: American Academy of Neurology ([news](#) : [web](#))

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