

New study continues to refine most effective methods to predict Alzheimer's disease

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A new Mayo Clinic study found that the clinical criteria for mild cognitive impairment is better at predicting who will develop Alzheimer's disease than a single memory test. This is one more piece of information to aid in the identification and early treatment of individuals most likely to develop Alzheimer's disease. This study will be presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference on Alzheimer's Disease on July 14 in Vienna.

Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative disorder of the brain in which nerve cells die over time, resulting in a steady loss of memory and other thinking abilities. An estimated 5.3 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease, and it is the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. Mild [cognitive impairment](#) is a transitional state between normal aging and the earliest features of Alzheimer's disease.

"The goal of this research is to try to predict who is going to develop Alzheimer's disease in the future," says Ronald Petersen, M.D., Ph.D., a neurologist at Mayo Clinic and the lead author of this study. "Ideally, we'd like to identify individuals before any damage is done in the brain. The sooner we intervene on this process with medications or other therapies, the greater impact we can have on lessening the number of people who will ultimately develop Alzheimer's disease."

Dr. Petersen and his team studied 1,261 individuals aged 70 years who were cognitively normal or had only slight memory impairment at the onset of the study. The individuals were followed for up to 10 years.

Scores on a memory test and the clinical criteria for [mild cognitive impairment](#) (including a [memory test](#) as well as other assessments of cognitive function) were studied as possible predictors for eventual development of Alzheimer's disease. The team found that the clinical criteria for mild cognitive impairment was better able to predict who was going to develop Alzheimer's disease in the future.

"As the baby boomers age into the period of risk for [Alzheimer's disease](#), we're talking about a significant number of individuals who may become cognitively impaired in the very near future," says Dr. Petersen. "Consequently, we need information like this about the best methods of early prediction so that we can develop therapies to prevent or treat the condition and avoid being overwhelmed by the burden of these individuals on the health care system."

Source: Mayo Clinic ([news](#) : [web](#))

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