

New add-on drug may improve memory in people with moderate Alzheimer's disease

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A new drug may improve memory problems in people with moderate Alzheimer's disease, according to a phase IIa study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 65th Annual Meeting in San Diego, March 16 to 23, 2013. The drug is called ORM-12741.

The drug is the first to target a specific subtype of adrenergic receptors (alpha-2C) in the brain, which are believed to be involved in modulation of brain functions under [stressful conditions](#), or the "fight or flight" response. For the clinical trial, 100 people with moderate Alzheimer's disease were randomly given either 30 to 60 milligrams or 100 to 200 milligrams of ORM-12741 or matching [placebo pill](#) twice a day for three months as add-on therapy to a cholinesterase drug. Additionally, use of [memantine](#) was allowed. These are the other Alzheimer drugs currently on the market. Neither the researchers nor the participants knew which treatments participants were receiving.

After three months, researchers retested several aspects of the participants' memory and behavior. Those who took ORM-12741 tested higher on the tests of memory compared to those who received the placebo pill. At three months, the memory scores for those who received the placebo pill had worsened by 33 percent, whereas the scores improved by 4 percent for those who took ORM-12741.

"Currently, there are still only a handful of Alzheimer's drugs on the market and they have only moderate effects on the symptoms of the

disease," said study author Juha Rouru, MD, of Orion Pharma in Turku, Finland. "Anytime you have a drug that targets a new pathway in the brain and shows effectiveness in clinical trials, it is exciting."

It is estimated that 13.8 million people will have Alzheimer's disease by 2050.

More information: The study was supported by Orion Pharma.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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