

Drugs used for impotence could treat vascular dementia?

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Scientists are to explore whether drugs usually used to treat erectile problems by expanding blood vessels could become the next major way to tackle the dementia epidemic.

Experts led by Dr Atticus Hainsworth at St George's, University of London, will explore whether tadalafil, which is a drug in the same class as Viagra, could help prevent vascular [dementia](#) by increasing blood flow to the brain.

Vascular dementia is the second most common form of dementia and accounts for around 110,000 cases of dementia in the UK.

Vascular dementia is often caused by [damage](#) to the small [blood vessels](#) of the brain leading to reduced blood flow to [brain tissue](#). This blood vessel damage- known as small vessel disease- is seen in the brains of 50-70% of elderly people. The researchers hope that tadalafil's blood-flow boosting properties can prevent the damage that leads to [vascular dementia](#).

A major trans-Atlantic research partnership is to be launched to investigate this potential treatment, funded by the Alzheimer's Society and the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation.

Dr Atticus Hainsworth, the lead researcher, said: "The drug tadalafil is widely used to increase [blood flow](#) in penile tissue. Now we're asking whether it can do the same for another vital organ, the brain.

"As there are very few drugs for the management of dementia, we want to know whether a well-known, well-tolerated [drug](#) can be used to help patients with this particular type of dementia.

"My colleagues and I are very enthusiastic about this trans-Atlantic initiative."

This new charity partnership is announced a year after the first G8 summit on dementia called for increased investment and global collaboration in dementia research in order to find a disease-modifying treatment by 2025. The research is part of a number of projects which have been announced by the Alzheimer's Society.

Dr Doug Brown, Director of Research and Development at Alzheimer's Society said: "Drug development can take decades and sadly, the path towards developing dementia treatments over the past decade is littered with drugs that have failed in clinical trials. As we learn more about the causes of dementia and its links to other conditions, there is hope that treatments we routinely use for other diseases may also work for people with dementia.

"These incredibly exciting studies could see existing treatments turned into drugs for the most common forms of dementia in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost of developing new drugs from scratch. By next year 850,000 people in the UK will have dementia and we owe it to them to do everything we can to develop better treatments and ultimately a cure. Research like this is a huge part of that goal."

Provided by St. George's University of London

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