

# Nestle teams up with Swiss pharma firm to develop Alzheimer's test

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Nestle Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS) and Swiss biopharmaceutical company AC Immune announced on Wednesday a new partnership to develop an early Alzheimer's diagnostic test.

According to an AC Immune statement, the goal of the research collaboration is to develop a "minimally invasive [diagnostic test](#) to identify patients at very early stages."

AC Immune's communications manager Eva Schier said the goal is to test for Alzheimer's by using a blood sample.

The sample could potentially show traces of neurofibrillary tangles, of which the chief component is a protein called Tau. "Tau tangles" are one of the major indicators of Alzheimer's disease.

"It has been impossible to detect Tau in the blood," Schier told AFP, adding that with the proper technology lab tests could help identify the initial biological signs of the disease.

Schier said that the research is still in its "very early" stages.

According to the statement, AC Immune will provide its "world leading expertise in the biology and pathology of Tau" as well as "laboratory capabilities."

NIHS will for its part provide a "technology platform to the research

program" to help identify Tau in blood plasma and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF).

NIHS director Professor Ed Baetge said that the "overarching goal is to develop nutritional approaches and technologies that help people maintain or re-establish their cognitive vigour."

A new case of Alzheimer's is diagnosed in the world every three seconds, and 46.8 million people were affected by the disease as of 2015. Global patient numbers are expected to increase to 131.5 million by 2050, according to AC Immune.

Professor Andrea Pfeifer, CEO of AC Immune, says that early detection is "needed for the development of pharmaceutical as well as nutritional approaches."

Schier says that the early detection should also benefit patients in other ways.

"The earlier you start treating patients (with Alzheimer's), the better it is," she said.

"Usually, the patient goes to the doctor when they already have problems. In an ideal world one could treat patients who don't have symptoms yet."

According to the statement, the new partnership is AC Immune's fourth involving the Tau protein. Financial details of the collaboration with NIHS were not disclosed.

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