

Research highlights misdiagnosis for people with Alzheimer's disease

July 27 2016

Research presented today (Tuesday 26 July) at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2016 suggests that men with Alzheimer's may be more likely to be misdiagnosed than women with the disease. A second study highlights the number of misdiagnoses in over 1,000 people, where just over 20% had either not been given a correct diagnosis of Alzheimer's, or had been wrongly diagnosed with the disease.

In the first study, researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Florida looked at brain samples from 1,606 people who had been found in a post-mortem examination to have had Alzheimer's disease. They found that [men](#) with the disease tended to be younger, while more women were affected in later life. The analysis also showed that damage to the brain was more likely to affect the hippocampus – an important region of the brain for memory – in women than in men. Men in the study were more likely to have been diagnosed with other conditions such as aphasia – a condition that causes language problems – or corticobasal degeneration, which causes problems with movement, rather than being diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

In a second study, a team from Canada examined brain tissue from 1,073 people who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia before they died. They found that 78.4% had a correct diagnosis of Alzheimer's, with the hallmark features of the disease present in their brains. However, 10.8% were false positives – people who had been diagnosed with the disease and did not show these features

– while 10.8% were false negatives – people who had not been diagnosed with Alzheimer's despite having the build-up of hallmark Alzheimer's proteins in their brains.

Dr Matthew Norton, Head of Policy at Alzheimer's Research UK, the UK's leading dementia research charity, said:

"We know that women are more likely to have a diagnosis of Alzheimer's than men, but the reasons for this remain unclear and this is an important emerging topic for research. These results suggest that the disease may be affecting men and [women](#) differently, and raise the possibility that the disease may be less likely to be recognised as Alzheimer's in men. Further research to explore the factors that may be driving these differences could provide useful insight to help inform efforts to treat and prevent the disease.

"This research further underlines the difficulties clinicians face in diagnosing Alzheimer's using currently available methods, and the need for better diagnostic tools to be made available. A timely and accurate diagnosis is vital for people to access the right care and treatments, and investment in research to improve [diagnosis](#) is crucial if we are to provide better outcomes for people with the [disease](#)."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

Citation: Research highlights misdiagnosis for people with Alzheimer's disease (2016, July 27) retrieved 19 April 2024 from

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