

Testing reveals transfusing young blood into Alzheimer's patients does not reverse disease

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Credit: public domain

(Medical Xpress)—A team of researchers with a startup company called Alkahest will be giving a presentation at this year's Clinical Trials on Alzheimer's Disease Conference detailing results of testing blood transfusions on elderly Alzheimer's patients. They are expected to claim that their testing revealed both null and positive results.

Representatives for Alkahest have been very vocal about their research efforts—the goal of the company is to find out if transfusing blood from young people into Alzheimer's patients will slow, stop or even reverse the symptoms of the disease.

The initiative by Alkahest is part of a broader program by [researchers](#) and others less qualified to determine if transfusing the blood of young, healthy people into older people, or people who are sick, offers any benefits. The whole grand experiment got its start a century and a half ago, when scientists sutured a young mouse to an old mouse to see if the old mouse would become younger. While that early research did report some benefits for the older mouse, the technique was not pursued for another hundred years. In more recent times, researchers have tried repeating the same experiments, while others have tried infusing blood and some have tried infusing just plasma. Such experiments have met thus far with mixed results, though most agree that young blood can rejuvenate body parts in some [older people](#).

In this new experiment, the researchers found 16 people with Alzheimer's disease who were willing to participate in the experimental program. Some were given young [blood](#), while others were given a placebo. After a certain amount of time, the patients were switched so that all could receive the [young blood](#) at some point in the experiment.

The researchers report that none of the volunteers did any better on cognitive tests taken during or after the conclusion of the transfusions. But, they note, that tests given to the people who took care of the patients revealed that virtually all of the volunteers did better at real life tasks, like getting dressed and helping with shopping. Others not involved with the study have suggested that such changes in ability are most likely due to an increase in attention by their caretakers, rather than from any benefit of the transfusions.

More information: The PLasma for Alzheimer Symptom Amelioration (PLASMA) Study (PLASMA), clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02256306

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