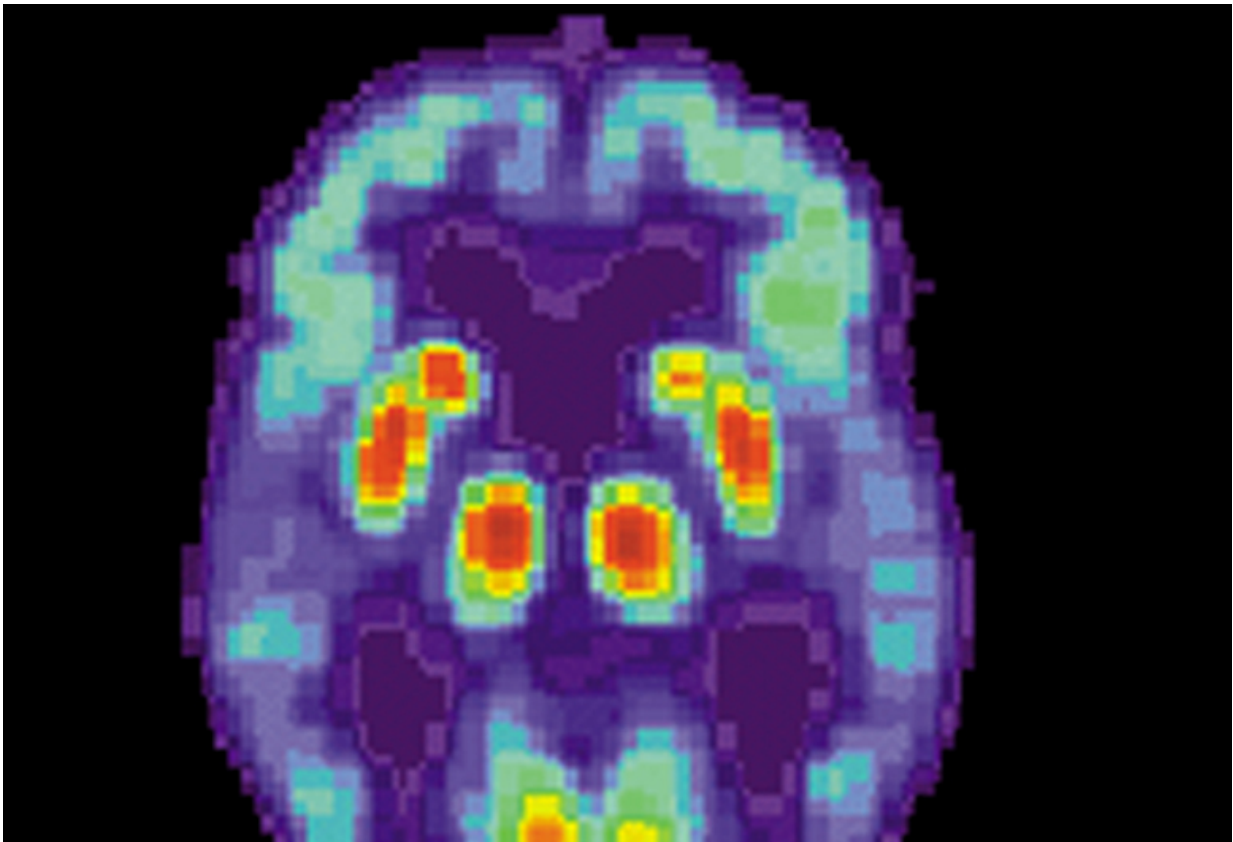


# Commonly used drug for Alzheimer's disease doubles risk of hospitalization

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PET scan of a human brain with Alzheimer's disease. Credit: public domain

A drug commonly used to manage symptoms of Alzheimer disease and other dementias—donepezil—is associated with a two-fold higher risk of hospital admission for rhabdomyolysis, a painful condition of muscle

breakdown, compared with several other cholinesterase inhibitors, found a study in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Dementia is a growing problem, with almost 10 million newly diagnosed cases every year around the world.

The study, led by researchers at Western University's Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Lawson Health Research Institute, looked at ICES data from 2002 to 2017 on 220 353 patients aged 66 years or older in Ontario, Canada, with a new prescription for donepezil, rivastigmine or galantamine, three cholinesterase inhibitors used to manage [dementia](#) and Alzheimer disease.

Researchers found that donepezil was associated with a two-fold higher risk of hospitalization for rhabdomyolysis, a serious condition that can result in kidney disease. The relative risk was small but statistically significant.

"The findings of this population-based cohort study support regulatory agency warnings about the risk of donepezil-induced rhabdomyolysis," writes Dr. Jamie Fleet, a postgraduate year 4 resident in [physical medicine](#) and rehabilitation now at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, with coauthors. "Reassuringly, the 30-day incidence of a hospital admission with rhabdomyolysis after initiating donepezil remains low.

"Risk of rhabdomyolysis with donepezil compared with rivastigmine or galantamine: a population-based cohort study" is published September 16, 2019.

**More information:** *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2019). [www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.190337](http://www.cmaj.ca/lookup/doi/10.1503/cmaj.190337)

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