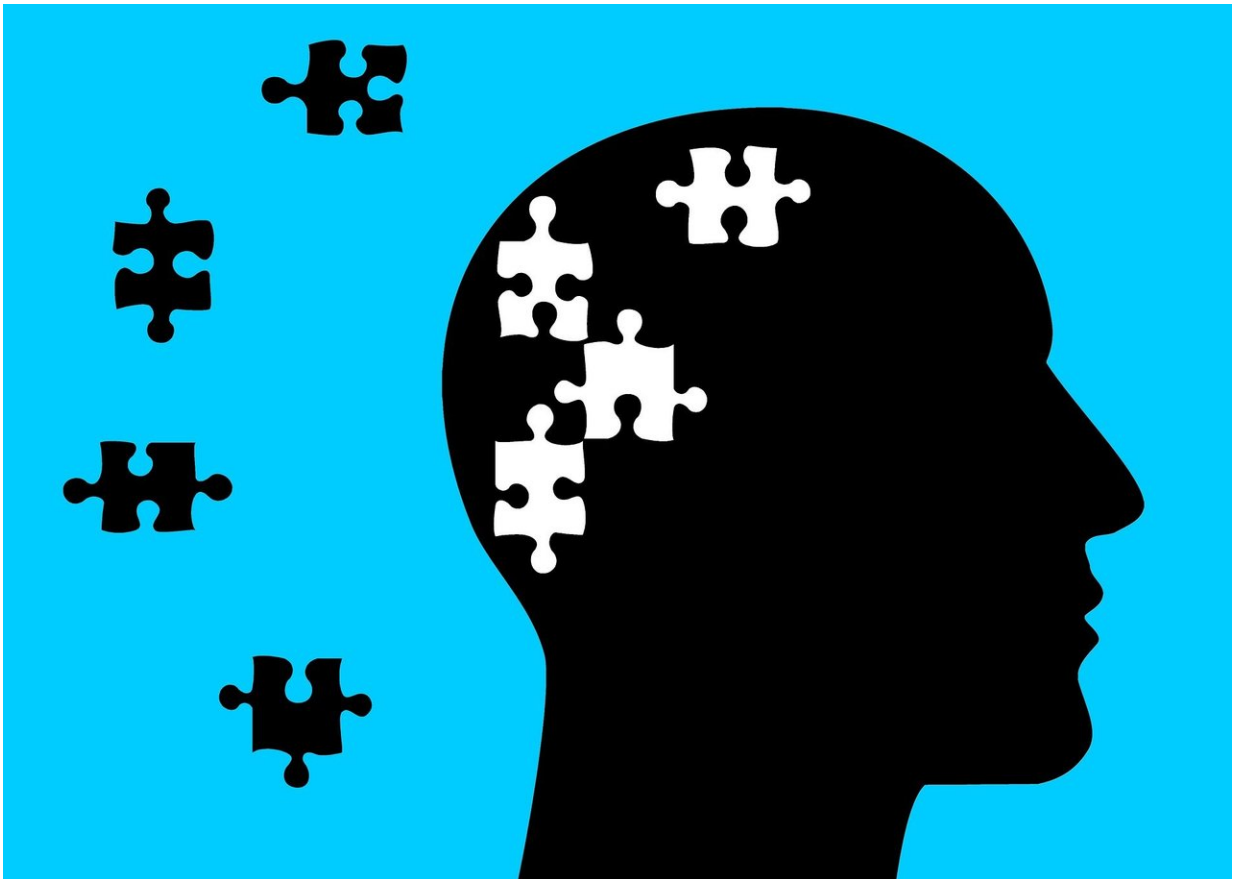


San Diego scientists to test drug meant to slow Alzheimer's before symptoms appear

February 10 2020, by Gary Robbins



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Scientists in San Diego are preparing to screen thousands of people globally to find candidates who are well-suited to take an experimental

drug that is designed to slow, and possibly stop, the progression of Alzheimer's disease.

The study will be led by the University of Southern California's Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research Institute—or ATRI—in Sorrento Mesa. Researchers are looking for people who do not have symptoms of Alzheimer's but do have elevated levels of beta-amyloid.

Amyloid is a protein that can turn into clumpy plaques that damage a person's ability to think and remember—the hallmarks of Alzheimer's.

The [experimental drug](#)—known as BAN2401—"would attack the plaques and remove them from the brain," said Paul Aisen, ATRI's director. "We believe the best benefit will come with the early administration of the drug, before there is substantial, irreversible damage."

Aisen is collaborating with Harvard researchers on the study, which will create 100 sites globally—including two to three in San Diego County—where people can undergo a PET scan to determine if they have elevated levels of beta-amyloid.

ATRI said in a statement it will screen about 9,000 people worldwide to come up with "1,400 who are clinically normal and have intermediate or elevated levels of amyloid in their brains. Researchers hope to screen the first participant by May 31 and complete enrollment in 18 to 30 months."

The institute says it will give the public plenty of advance notice of where the San Diego County screening sites will be located.

An earlier Phase 2 clinical trial showed that BAN2401 appears to have some ability to remove amyloid from the brain, which is essential to

slowing Alzheimer's. But, to date, it hasn't proven to be a breakthrough drug. And scientists continue to suffer expensive setbacks in searching for ways to treat Alzheimer's.

Last year, the pharmaceutical companies Eisai and Biogen ended a large Phase 3 trial of the [drug](#) aducanumab because it wasn't producing the effects scientists hoped for.

Eisai subsequently decided to partner with the National Institute on Aging in funding the new BAN2401 study, which will collectively cost them upwards of \$100 million.

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