

Family history of brain tumors linked to increased risk of brain cancer

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People with a family history of cancerous brain tumors appear to be at higher risk of developing the same kind of tumors compared to people with no such family history, according to a study published in the September 23, 2008, issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

For the study, researchers looked at the medical records of 1,401 people from Utah with primary brain tumors. Family medical history information was available for at least three generations for each participant. The group had at least one of two types of tumors: glioblastomas or astrocytomas. Glioblastomas are a category of astrocytomas that are cancerous and usually fast growing and deadly. Astrocytomas are tumors in the brain or spinal cord of a less aggressive grade than glioblastomas.

The study found that people whose immediate relatives suffered from glioblastomas had twice the risk of contracting the same kind of brain cancer. People with immediate relatives who had astrocytomas were nearly four times more likely to develop the same kind of tumor compared to people who did not have immediate relatives with the brain tumor.

"Our study suggests that people with a family history of brain tumors should make their doctor aware of this and tell them about any other risk factors they have," said study author Deborah Blumenthal, MD, with the Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center in Tel Aviv, Israel, and the Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

"Hopefully studies like these will eventually help us to identify genes that may be responsible for these types of brain tumors," Blumenthal said.

Blumenthal says an estimated 20,500 cases of new primary brain tumors were diagnosed in the

United States in 2005, half of which were gliomas, or cancerous brain tumors.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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