

Alzheimer's study to look at gut health link

December 28 2018



A new Aberdeen-led study will examine the link between the gut and the brain.
Credit: University of Aberdeen

Researchers will study the gut health of people with Alzheimer's to see if diet can play a role in managing the behavioural and psychological symptoms of the disease.

The University of Aberdeen study, which is the first of its kind, will recruit participants from local care homes.

The population of microbes, including bacteria, inside the [human gut](#) is known as the gut microbiota.

A diverse and balanced population of gut microbiota is important for maintaining a strong immune system and aiding digestion.

There is increasing evidence that suggests the gut microbiota is a key link between specific nutrients and [brain function](#).

This first study aims to collect [faecal samples](#) from three groups of people – people with [dementia](#) and challenging behaviour; people with dementia without challenging behaviour; and a control group of people without dementia.

By studying these samples, the researchers hope to identify whether or not there are notable differences in the gut diversity of the three study groups.

If successful, this study could act as the first step towards establishing a link between diet and behaviour and possibly lead to [future research](#) looking at teasing out the complex relationship between diet, [gut microbiota](#) and challenging behaviour in Alzheimer's disease.

Professor Alex Johnstone from the University of Aberdeen's Rowett Institute said: "It has become evident that there is a two-way communication between the gut microbiome and the brain. That relationship is not yet fully understood but the goal for us is to identify whether changes in diet can affect the clinical symptoms associated with dementia.

"This study is the first of its kind and could lead to the possibility of dietary intervention as a solution to prevent behavioural and psychosocial issues which are associated with adverse outcomes as well as distressing to people with dementia, their family and carers.

"We want to explore whether or not the gut-brain axis plays a key role in behavioural changes in dementia."

Provided by University of Aberdeen

Citation: Alzheimer's study to look at gut health link (2018, December 28) retrieved 21 December 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-12-alzheimer-gut-health-link.html>

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