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By 314



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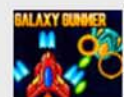
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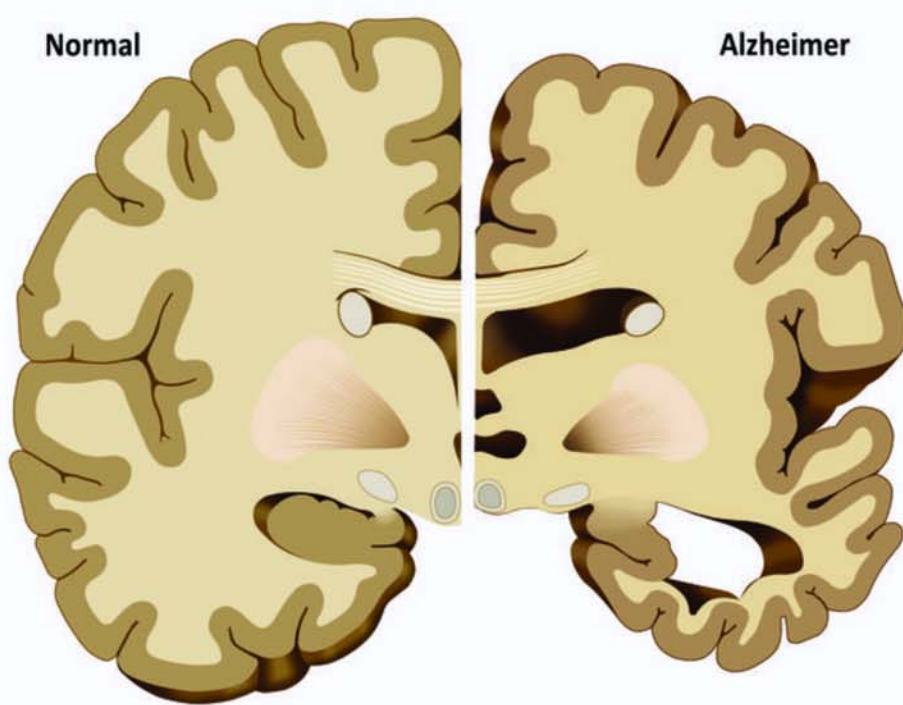


Illustration of a healthy brain compared to a brain with Alzheimer's. (Shutterstock image)

Posted August 23, 2016

DETROIT — New developments in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease and dementia may be on the way thanks to a new program uniting three of Michigan's most prestigious universities.

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The National Institutes of Health has awarded **\$50 million** — to be dispersed over the next five years — to a new statewide program run through the University of Michigan, Michigan State University and Wayne State University to enhance the understanding and treatment of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. It will be called the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Core Center.



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More than 5 million Americans ages 65 and older have Alzheimer's disease, and several million others have other forms of dementia, including frontotemporal dementia, Lewy body dementia and vascular dementia. What makes any new research in the area so crucial is there exists no disease-slowing therapies for any type of dementia.

"The ADCC will connect three major research centers in the state and, by doing so, reach a lot of Michiganders," remarked Henry Paulson, a neurologist and director of the ADCC. "There will be pilot research grants through this program available to all three universities, and there will be an annual symposium to share findings and allow researchers and the public to learn about these conditions."

Scott Counts, a co-investigator in neuropathology at Michigan State, is among those involved in the program. As an expert who examines the brains of those who have died while suffering from dementia, he believes the ADCC will mean significant strides for Michigan residents.

"It's a huge win for the state," remarked Counts. "This money will allow us to improve access to care for families suffering from these conditions by providing more classes, information and resources. This money also will allow the universities to participate in new clinical trials and let us develop new programs to improve the quality of life for our patients."

One of the reasons why the ADCC funding is considered so significant among experts is it will focus on areas of research often overlooked in the field.

"Many people know beta-amyloids are a key factor in Alzheimer's-related conditions, but there are other factors which aren't getting enough attention," said Paulson. "We want to focus research on these under-researched factors."

New programs, working through the ADCC, will coordinate with existing geriatric, movement disorder and degenerative programs across the three universities to develop new lines of research, in some cases supported by pilot project funding. One of the key areas of research will be looking at minority populations — particularly African-Americans — to study how dementia-related illnesses affect previously under-studied groups.

"A major aspect of the program will be a focus on working closely with different experts and looking at African-Americans with dementia," explained Paulson. "This is a group which has not had very much research devoted to it. Hopefully, more attention and data within this population will yield positive results."

Counts said working with individual ethnic groups, particularly those who have not received as much study in the past, could allow researchers to make connections, not only for that ethnic group, but for other populations as well.

"Everyone brings their own risk factors with them, such as genetic or environmental

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factors," said Counts. "Diabetes and hypertension directly affect the risk for developing Alzheimer's, so if we can reach groups with higher risk of those conditions, as the African-American population does, we can better help more people."

Several doctors taking part in the ADCC said they are optimistic about the program and the impact it could have for Michigan residents.

"Ultimately we want to cure Alzheimer's, but in more of a short-term sense, hopefully the program will be successful and serve as a national model for using taxpayer money to make big strides in medicine and push the field forward," said Counts. "This program has the potential to unite the state together to tackle a problem in a synergistic way."



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