

Dispatch: New Hope For Alzheimer's Disease

By ACSH Staff — July 14, 2010

In its first update in 26 years, the National Institute on Aging and the Alzheimer's Association proposes [new diagnostic criteria](#) ^[1] for earlier detection of all three stages of Alzheimer's disease — pre-clinical, mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's dementia — based on genetic risk factors and biomarkers.

Current Alzheimer's drugs do not significantly delay disease progression, but only provide some benefit in controlling behavioral abnormalities in late-stage patients. "These new detection methods present a great opportunity for drug companies to obtain more data on the progression of Alzheimer's disease in order to develop better therapies," says ACSH's Jeff Stier. "For years, we've been stuck in the status quo of no progress, and although we don't quite have the answer or the drug yet, there exists a pathway toward something positive."

Though ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross advises there's still no way for doctors to predict which patient will definitely progress to Alzheimer's dementia while they are in the pre-clinical stage, he does believe the new detection criteria have the potential to aid in the development of preventive Alzheimer's drugs. "If we can obtain a large population of people who possess abnormalities that strongly predict disease progression, we can finally begin to develop and test preventive drugs. So this news is both optimistic and exciting considering the vast wasteland of therapies we have now."

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[1] <http://www.webmd.com/alzheimers/news/20100713/new-recommendations-alzheimers-diagnosis?print=true>