

New Alzheimer's research illuminates origins of disease

The hope that Alzheimer's will one day be curable has in recent years faded to a flicker as successive clinical trials ended in failure. But the prospect of a treatment this week grew a little brighter as scientists uncovered a new and unexpected explanation for the development of the disease.

The latest study suggests that [immune cells could be going rogue in the brain](#) and contributing to the development of Alzheimer's. Experiments on mice showed cells that normally protect the brain beginning to consume a vital nutrient called arginine as they progressed towards a state similar to Alzheimer's.

By blocking this process with a drug, the team from Duke University in North Carolina were able to prevent the formation of plaques, which are the most visible indication of Alzheimer's in the brain, and also halt memory loss in mice.

The discovery is one of a number of significant developments lifting a sense of pessimism created by years of deadlock. Between 2002 and 2012, 99.6 percent of drugs studies aimed at preventing, curing or improving Alzheimer's symptoms were either halted or discontinued. The failure of so many trials, at astronomical financial cost, sent researchers back to the drawing board. This reassessment is finally beginning to pay off as scientists drill down into the basic physiological causes of Alzheimer's.

Read full, original article: [Alzheimer's: New hope for research after years of gloom and dead ends](#)