

Dementia patients often have lucid moments. Can these ‘awakenings’ help us treat Alzheimer’s and other diseases?

An elderly woman suffering from late-stage Alzheimer’s disease had neither talked to nor reacted to any of her family members for years. Then, one day, she suddenly started chatting with her granddaughter, asking for news of other family members and even giving her granddaughter advice. “It was like talking to Rip van Winkle,” the granddaughter told University of Virginia researchers of her astonishment. Unfortunately, the reawakening did not last—the grandmother died the next week.

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[I]f the grandmother was able to tap into mysterious neural reserves, cases such as hers might help scientists explore how cognition could possibly be restored—even briefly—in patients with the most advanced neurodegenerative disease.

[Physician Basil] Eldadah and the scientists he assembled have taken the first steps toward systematic and rigorous study of what they are now calling paradoxical lucidity.

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The workshop participants published two papers on it in the August issue of Alzheimer’s and Dementia, and the NIA announced plans to fund relevant research next year. The early goals are modest—the formulation of an operational definition and a gauging of the phenomenon’s prevalence. The possible long-term implications, however, are tantalizing.

Read full, original post: [“Awakenings” in Advanced Dementia Patients Hint at Untapped Brain Reserves](#)