

Why apathy is often the first symptom of Alzheimer's

[Compelling new research](#) from the Indiana University School of Medicine has homed in on a degenerative mechanism that could explain why symptoms such as apathy are the first signs of Alzheimer's disease. The findings suggest disrupting this process could slow the progression of Alzheimer's-related dementia.

A growing body of research has [recently indicated apathy](#) is one of the [earliest signs of dementia](#). Before cognitive decline becomes apparent and memory problems arise, apathy has been found to signal the onset of neurodegeneration. But what is actually going on in the brain to cause this neuropsychiatric symptom?

Pharmacologist Yao-Ying Ma spent most of her career investigating the neurological mechanisms of substance abuse. Her background in drug addiction led to a research focus on a part of the brain called the nucleus accumbens, a brain region that plays a strong role influencing motivation and reward pathways.

Follow the latest news and policy debates on sustainable agriculture, biomedicine, and other 'disruptive' innovations. Subscribe to our newsletter.

[SIGN UP](#)

In a study published in the journal [Molecular Psychiatry](#) Ma and her team report a novel degenerative mechanism in animal models of Alzheimer's disease. The researchers found when parts of the nucleus accumbens were exposed to amyloid protein aggregations a previously undiscovered degenerative process was triggered.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here**](#)