Genetic risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease more strongly influenced by mother’s side than father’s side of the family

It’s expected the number of people affected by dementia will nearly double every 20 years. Finding ways to better diagnose, treat and even prevent dementia is more important than ever.

This latest study could provide a useful target for researchers hoping to develop new therapies.

The study, published in JAMA Neurology, showed that people whose mother had a history of memory loss had a greater risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease at any age when compared to people with only a paternal history of memory loss (or no family history of memory loss whatsoever).

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The hypothesis is that these clumped amyloid plaques are the prime suspects in damaging and killing brain cells (neurons), resulting in Alzheimer’s disease. The second hallmark of Alzheimer’s is the protein tau, which wasn’t assessed in this study.

The accumulation of beta-amyloid is thought to be a prominent precursor of Alzheimer’s disease, as people can have raised amyloid levels years before memory problems start.

The results of the PET scans showed that participants whose mother had a history of memory impairment (regardless of the age her memory problems started) had higher beta-amyloid levels.

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