Hypertension is Associated With Poor Cognitive Performance in the Elderly

Uncontrolled elevated blood pressure is associated with worse cognitive function in the elderly, according to a large population-based study.*

Scientists studied a group of 6,163 men and women aged >60 years. For participants aged 60 to 74, severe hypertension was associated with the worst results on cognitive testing, whereas optimal blood pressure (<120/80 mmHg) was associated with the best cognitive performance. Statistical analysis revealed that a higher severity of hypertension was associated with worse cognitive function, particularly at ages 70 and older. When hypertension was present but was well controlled with medication or lifestyle, cognitive capability was nearly the same as in participants without hypertension.

Hypertension predisposes to stroke and Alzheimer’s disease, the authors therefore concluded. "Optimal control of blood pressure may be beneficial in attenuating the risk of cognitive decline as the population ages." —Lana J. Nir, M.D.

Cod Liver Oil Reduces Rheumatoid Arthritis Drug Requirement

Patients with rheumatoid arthritis may be able to reduce their dose of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) by adding cod liver oil to their daily regimen, according to the journal Rheumatology.*

Researchers enrolled 97 patients with rheumatoid arthritis undergoing NSAID treatment. Participants received a placebo or a daily dose of 10 grams of cod liver oil (providing 2.2 grams of omega-3 fats plus vitamins A, D, and E) for nine months.

After three months, the participants were instructed to gradually reduce their medication usage and to discontinue their drugs if possible. Among those who completed the full nine months of fish oil therapy, 59% successfully lowered their medication dose. They also experienced a modest improvement in pain symptoms compared with the placebo group.

"Fish oil supplementation should be considered in rheumatoid arthritis patients to help them reduce their NSAID intake in order to attenuate the risks of gastrointestinal and cardiovascular adverse events associated with these drugs," the authors concluded.

—Dayna Dye

Magnesium Deficiency Linked with Cellular Aging

Human cells grown in a magnesium-deficient environment undergo accelerated senescence (aging), according to a new report.* Magnesium inadequacy is estimated to affect half the US population and has been linked with aging-related diseases such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, and some cancers.

Scientists cultured human fibroblasts (structural framework cells) in media containing varying amounts of magnesium. Cells grown in reduced-magnesium media appeared to undergo accelerated senescence. One of the most notable signs of accelerated aging was increased loss of telomere length compared with cells grown in normal-magnesium conditions. Malfunction of telomeres (DNA sequences that cap chromosomes) has been associated with aging and cancer. Magnesium deficiency may promote cellular senescence by increasing the oxidative stress that damages telomeres. "We are now thinking that cellular consequences of magnesium deficiency may be driving long-term chronic disease," the authors noted.

—Dayna Dye


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