

STANFORD/VA ALZHEIMER'S CENTER

AGING CLINICAL RESEARCH CENTER

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE RESEARCH CENTER OF CALIFORNIA

VA SIERRA-PACIFIC MENTAL ILLNESS RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND CLINICAL CENTER

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Epilepsy Drug May Delay Alzheimer's Progression

Stanford Participates in Trial Focusing on "Tangles"

A medication that has been around for 40 years and successfully used to treat epilepsy, migraines and bipolar disorder may provide new hope for the more than four million Americans suffering with Alzheimer's disease. Stanford University is one of 30 institutions participating in a national study to determine if the medication valproate preserves functioning and delays the expected decline associated with Alzheimer's disease.

The \$10 million "Valproate in Dementia" or VALID study, led by the nationally renowned Alzheimer's research group at the University of Rochester Medical Center, will target 300 patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's who are living at home and have not yet shown signs of agitation. Alzheimer's patients experience personality changes with symptoms of agitation: easy to anger, low frustration level, and at its worst, physical aggression. The latter is one of the primary symptoms that prompt families to place loved ones in a skilled nursing facility.

Scientists will study whether patients who take valproate experience less agitation, as well as whether valproate will slow down the deterioration of memory and daily

functioning that occurs as the disease progresses. And, according to Dr. Jerome Yesavage, director of the Aging Clinical Research Center, there's good reason to conduct this study.

"When the Rochester group began to look at valproate in the laboratory, we were amazed to see that this simple drug blocked several key molecular events that we know are involved in the progression of Alzheimer's," Dr. Yesavage said. "We are eager to learn whether these neuroprotective effects that valproate exhibited in the laboratory will also occur in Alzheimer's patients."

The VALID study is the first of its kind to study an agent that may have the potential to block "tangles," one of the hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease linked with memory loss and other symptoms of dementia.

Tangles are abnormal brain tissue structures formed by abnormal processing of a protein called tau. Normally, tau is crucial for intracellular functioning and structure, but in Alzheimer's patients, a stringy cluster of tau and phosphate molecules form, leading to dysfunction

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6TH ANNUAL UPDATES

ON DEMENTIA CONFERENCE:

Translating Research into Practice



Fairchild Auditorium

Stanford University School of Medicine

Wednesday, June 16th, 2004

For more information contact:

Becky Mann at (650) 962-811 ext 351, or

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that impairs the cell's ability to communicate with neighboring cells. This eventually leads to cell death, contributing to the confusion, disorientation and forgetfulness associated with Alzheimer's.

Previously, researchers have studied the effects of valproate in Alzheimer's patients already showing signs of agitation, and have found that the medication did provide a beneficial effect for agitation in some patients.

"Until we have a cure for Alzheimer's, we are continually searching for ways to provide patients with prolonged autonomy so they can live their life to the fullest for as long as possible," Dr. Yesavage said.

The VALID study will follow the 300 patients over two years; Stanford hopes to enroll 10-16 patients in the trial. While in the study, patients may continue standard treatment with other medications. In addition to examining valproate's possible effect on slowing progression of symptoms of the illness, researchers will also conduct two ancillary studies. One concerns a blood test that will investigate how Alzheimer's affects the manufacture of critical cell products, messenger RNA and protein. The other will use repeated MRI scans in a subset of 200 people to determine if valproate slows or alters the expected loss of whole brain volume in Alzheimer's.

VALID is funded primarily with a grant by the National Institutes of Health. In addition, Abbott Laboratories is donating valproate and the placebo medication, as well as the funds to finance the two ancillary studies.

For more information on the VALID Study, please call Lisa Kinoshita, Ph.D. (650) 849-0571 or Alena Kleytman (650) 849-0339.

STANFORD/ VA ALZHEIMER'S CENTER SUPPORT GROUPS

**All groups meet at the Palo Alto VA Health Care System
3801 Miranda Ave., Bldg. 4, conference room A101
(650) 858-3915 or 493-5000, x65051**

There are issues unique to individuals with memory changes and to their family members. Learning how to better address these issues, assist in the development of new services, and disseminating information to other health care professionals is vital. We are involved in ongoing development of support groups to achieve these goals. Currently the following groups are available at our center:

Caregivers Support Group

This is a small group designed to provide answers to individual questions and concerns of caregivers as well as educational information. It also provides a network to offer support and guidance.

Mild Cognitive Impairment Group

For individuals with a diagnosis of mild cognitive impairment (symptoms not meeting criteria for dementia) and their family members or friends. The group focuses on 1) education, 2) communication, 3) management, and 4) psychosocial concerns.

Early-Stage Alzheimer's Patient and Caregiver Group

This group is for early-stage Alzheimer's patients and their caregivers. The group is designed to provide a forum for participants to discuss their concerns and ask questions about the illness. Sessions combine education, psychotherapeutic principles, and support to enhance understanding and coping mechanisms.

Some of our basic goals include helping participants to:

- Develop new connections with fellow participants.
- Lessen feelings of isolation and being alone.
- Gain a better understanding of Alzheimer's Disease and Mild Cognitive Impairment.
- Keep abreast of new research and possible treatments.
- Keep current with legal, financial, long term planning issues and community resources.
- Learn about opportunities for participation in community activities.
- Acknowledge personal strengths and positive aspects.
- Share information about what works and what does not work.

Discussion topics include:

- Living with uncertainty.
- Accepting the need for others.
- Retaining physical health and mobility.
- Maintaining interpersonal relationships.
- Incorporating disease into one's life.
- Maintaining self-esteem / personal identity.

CAREGIVER CLASSES & PROGRAMS
OLDER ADULT & FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER
VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM, MENLO PARK DIVISION
795 WILLOW ROAD, BLDG. 205, ROOM 117
(650) 493-5000, EXTENSION 22011

Caregiver Assistance Programs

Helping Caregivers Cope with Caring for a Loved-one with Memory Loss

What services do we offer?

African-American

- We have two programs that serve the African-American caregiver population of the Bay Area
- Both projects are designed to test multi-component, in-home, or group interventions to help African-American caregivers deal with the stress and burden associated with their role

Caucasian

- We have three programs that serve the Anglo/Caucasian caregiver population of the Bay Area
- All three are designed to test multi-component, in-home, or group interventions to help caregivers deal with the stress and burden associated with their role
- Two of the three projects, Stress Management and Inner Resources, are also doing research on the association of simple, non-invasive physiological measures on the stress of care giving

Chinese

- One program specifically intended for the Chinese caregiver population of the Bay Area
- The program is designed to help caregivers understand and cope with the difficult behaviors that accompany memory problems
- In-home visits and one-on-one attention offered

Latino

- We have two programs that serve the growing Latino caregiver population of the Bay Area
- Both projects are designed to primarily test interventions to help Latino caregivers deal with the stress and burden associated with their role
- Interventions include multi-component, in-home or groups designed to address problems commonly faced by caregivers

Male Caregivers

- Our male caregiver project is designed specifically for the stress and burden associated with being a male caregiver

Our services are available in Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and English
For more information, please visit <http://www.oafc-menlo.com/>, or call:

1-800-943-4333

650-617-2774 (Spanish language line)

650-493-5000 x22005 (office of Dr. Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, director of these projects)

650-493-5000 x 22011 (general office number for the Older Adult and Family Center)

All services are FREE of charge to eligible caregivers and you need not be a veteran to be eligible

WALKING FOR A CURE: MEMORY WALK 2003

On October 11th 2003, over 4,000 walkers participated in the Alzheimer's Association's annual fund-raiser, The Memory Walk. The event was held at Treasure Island. A record 65 teams participated and helped raise more than \$620,000 to benefit Alzheimer's patients and their families. Among these teams was the Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team, clad in red t-shirts. The Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team was a collaborative effort of the Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center (PAD), the Stanford/VA Older Adult and Family Center (MPD), and the Stanford/VA Alzheimer's Disease Center (PAD). Our very own Dr. Dolores Gallagher-Thompson even led the Memory Walk's pre-walk warm-up session!



The Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team raised an impressive \$4600, our team's record!!!

A special thanks to the 2003 Stanford/VA memory walk team:

Aimee Mott (team captain), Tamarra Duppart (assistant team captain), Tamara Karnos, Carrie Karnos, Scott Sharpe, Laura Duato, Deryl Wicks, Lori Newkirk, Eric Crawford, Vicka Filanosky, Zoe Gillispie, Peng-Chih Wang, Paulette Tang, Dolores Gallagher-Thompson, Larry Thompson, Laurie Leung, Esther Wilson, Lani Singer, Angella Egwaikhide, Adam Spira, Alex Taylor, Alexandra Velasquez, Bernard Smith, Betty Wexler, Bonnie Anderson, Brent Mausbach, Candace Romandia, Carol Hawthorn, Catherine Sutherland, Ciara Mahan, Claire Danielsen, Corrie Long, Eric Miller, Fang Shen, Gia Robinson, Hana Lee, Heather Gray, Helen Iverson, Hui-Qi Tong, Janise Kim, Jean Smith, Jeff DeSpain, Jillian Dubman, John del Fiugo, Joy Taylor, Karina Meneses, Krystal Kierod, Lindsay Lightbody, Lisa Kinoshita, Loretta Wales, Lori Newkirk, Marianne Kabour, Nicole Wagstaff, Paul Shurgot, Richard Chang, Richard Wales, Shannon Hsu, Susan Bass, Vanessa Williams, Victor Chang, Weiling Liu, and Zerelda del Fiugo.

UP AND COMING EVENTS



**Northern California & Northern Nevada
Treasure Island - San Francisco, CA
October 9, 2004**

**Become a Stanford/VA Memory Walk Team Member or Supporter!
Sign-up at: <http://www.alznorcal.org/memwalk04.asp>**



Spotlight: Lisa Kinoshita, Ph.D.

Clinical Trial Research Coordinator, Stanford/VA Aging Clinical Research Center

We are extremely proud to welcome Dr. Kinoshita to our research team. Dr. Kinoshita completed her clinical psychology internship at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System where she received extensive training in geriatric psychology and neuropsychological assessment. During her internship, she learned extensive memory evaluation methods using neuropsychological measures and directly observed the benefits of early dementia evaluations for older adults. She also conducted cognitive behavioral therapy with depressed dementia caregivers. Dr. Kinoshita was the first postdoctoral fellow in dementia research with the Mental Illness Research Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC). As a fellow, she pursued additional training in neuropsychological assessment with older adults and began conducting research on culture fair memory tests, in particular with Japanese and Chinese elders. During her fellowship she also collected data on a popular visual memory measure and plans on publishing the findings later this year. Dr. Kinoshita joined our ACRC research team in June 2003. As a Research Associate, Dr. Kinoshita coordinates a number of studies, including three multicenter medication trials aimed at slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease. She also coordinates a study designed to validate an interactive telephone memory screening.

When Dr. Kinoshita is not with research participants, she finds time to write. She recently published an article on the influence of traditional Japanese cultural beliefs on Japanese-American caregiving. She is currently co-authoring a book chapter on cognitive behavioral therapy with culturally diverse older adults and is co-editor of the second edition of the Handbook of Asian American Psychology.

*If you have a memory problem or know someone with memory problems
and you would like to schedule a clinical assessment, contact:*

(650) 858-3915

INTERNET CONNECTIONS

VISIT THE STANFORD/VA ALZHEIMER'S CENTER

ON THE WEB:

<http://arcc.stanford.edu>

VISIT ACRC ON THE WEB:

<http://alzheimer.stanford.edu>

VISIT MIRECC ON THE WEB:

<http://mirecc.stanford.edu>

VISIT OAC ON THE WEB:

<http://www.med.stanford.edu/oac>

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