

Scientists find new cause of Alzheimer's

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Belgium researchers say they are the first to demonstrate the quantity of amyloid protein in brain cells is a major factor of Alzheimer's disease.

Amyloid protein has already been known to be the primary component of senile plaques in the brains of patients. The researchers say their discovery demonstrates the greater the quantity of the protein, the younger the dementia patient is.

Alzheimer's disease is a memory disorder that affects up to 70 percent of all dementia patients. In Belgium, about 100,000 people suffer from the disease that gradually destroys brain cells responsible for memory and knowledge.

Ever since the disease was reported by Alois Alzheimer 100 years ago scientists have been searching for ways to treat it.

The Flanders Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology scientists affiliated with the University of Antwerp say their findings lead to a new understanding: the quantity of the amyloid precursor protein, and thus of the amyloid protein, in brain cells contributes significantly to the risk of contracting Alzheimer's.

They said that discovery will have to be taken into account in diagnostic tests and in the search for new medicines.

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