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Blood pressure drugs better dementia

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Singapore: A research published in the online journal *BMJ Open*, highlighted that ACE inhibitors, which are a class of drugs used to lower blood pressure, may slow the rate of cognitive decline typical of dementia and may even boost brain power.

The researchers compared the rates of cognitive decline in 361 patients who had either been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, vascular dementia, or a mix of both. Eighty five of the patients were already taking ACE inhibitors; the rest were not.

The researchers also assessed the impact of ACE inhibitors on the brain power of 30 patients newly prescribed these drugs, during their first six months of treatment. The average age of all the participants was 77.

Between 1999 and 2010, the cognitive decline of each patient was assessed using either the Standardized Mini Mental State Examination (SMMSE) or the Quick Mild Cognitive Impairment (Qmci) screen on two separate occasions, six months apart. When compared with those not taking ACE inhibitors, those on these drugs experienced marginally slower rates of cognitive decline.

In those whose brain power had been assessed by Qmci, which is a more sensitive screen than the SMMSE, the difference was small, but significant. And the brain power of those patients newly prescribed ACE inhibitors actually improved over the six month period, compared with those already taking them, and those not taking them at all.

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The authors of the study said, "This supports the growing body of evidence for the use of ACE inhibitors and other agents in the management of dementia. Although the differences were small and of uncertain clinical significance, if sustained over years, the compounding effects may well have significant clinical benefits."

The research has been jointly conducted by Dr Yang Gao, Center for Gerontology and Rehabilitation, University College Cork; Dr RÃ?Æ?Ã?Â³nÃ?Æ?Ã?Â¡n O'Caoimh, Department of Business Information Systems, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland; Dr Liam Healy, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland; Dr David M

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