



## Causes and Solutions vs. Diagnoses and Drugs Using the Example of Alzheimer's Disease



Dr. Kate Thomsen and Silky

With so much money to be made on diagnostic testing and drugs, our health care system has little incentive to understand what may be the underlying causes of disease and how to prevent them. In order to find causes and prevent disease, our health care system must be able to fund creative researchers, and providers need to be open to new possibilities and embrace the complexity that all human physical conditions are a consequence of multifactorial experience.

There are creative researchers out there who have shown us that the cause of almost all chronic illness is inflammation. Acute inflammation is the body's immune system reacting to harmful stimuli like injury, infection and irritation. The affected area gets red, hot, swollen and painful. Inappropriate, persisting immune responses produce chronic inflammation – a slow burning fire throughout the body. This chronic inflammation is the process underlying cancer, osteoporosis, autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis, allergies, eczema, diabetes, atherosclerosis, Parkinson's disease, ulcerative colitis, Alzheimer's Disease, and others. Uncovering the cause of inflammation involves exploring many factors in an individual's genes-lifestyle relationship. It means looking at what the individual needs

(correcting nutritional deficits, bacterial balance in the gut, musculoskeletal balance, physical movement, spiritual and emotional support, specific therapeutics) and what the individual needs to get rid of (infection, excess body fat, allergens, toxic chemicals and heavy metals, harmful medications). Our modern medicine focuses on one factor per disease, e.g. cholesterol as the cause of heart disease and too much stomach acid as the cause of heartburn. This is convenient as there are drugs to modify these "causes" – only to create more imbalance. Reducing cholesterol to the currently recommended extremely low levels reduces its ability to function as a component of cell membranes and sex steroids. Reducing stomach acid eliminates protection against unwanted pathogens entering the body and slows the breakdown of foods into nutrients. Searching for the causes of inflammation is a different way of looking at chronic illness.

Alzheimer's Disease is a chronic, progressive dementia associated with the formation of amyloid plaque and neurofibrillary tangles in the brain. The more plaque – the worse the dementia. New research has been devoted to finding new imaging technologies (to identify plaques) and drugs attempting to eliminate plaque. Yet a clear understanding of the cause of Alzheimer's Disease is not known. But a new paradigm is emerging that will demand some open-mindedness. It appears that an agent (infection? toxin?) is irritating the microglial cells (the support cells in the brain). In response, the microglial cells produce cytokines (chemical messages that attract an inflammation reaction). This fuels the progressive,

low grade inflammation that eventually leads to formation of amyloid that forms plaque and the death of brain cell (neurons). But if Alzheimer's Disease is really an infectious disease then could the inflammation and amyloid production a part of the body's defense via the innate immune system? It appears so and here's the data:

- B-amyloid is an "antimicrobial" (fights bugs) with activity against many bacteria, yeast and viruses. (in other words, it may be helpful)
- A drug in development aimed at reducing amyloid plaque in Alzheimer's subjects caused worse and more rapid progression of dementia than placebo
- DNA from Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 (HSV1) has been isolated in amyloid plaque
- 90% of all adults have evidence of exposure to HSV1 and it can remain silent through much of life and reactivate intermittently
- Studies monitoring antibodies in the blood show that reactivation of HSV1 is strongly correlated with the development of Alzheimer's Disease
- HSV1 DNA is found in the regions of the brain where Alzheimer's plaque forms (frontal and temporal areas) and is not found in areas where plaque is not found (e.g., occipital areas)

The evidence is becoming quite convincing that Alzheimer's Disease is related to infection with Herpes Simplex Virus1. Other infectious agents have also been implicated (Chlamydia pneumonia DNA has also been disproportionately found in the brains of people with Alzheimer's). Having the ApoE4 gene makes the brain more vulnerable to infection and increases risk of HSV1 cold sores. Keeping an open

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mind, other risk factors driving this inflammation in the brain will no doubt be found. Knowing the cause, we can better treat or prevent this devastating disease with caloric restriction, anti-oxidants/anti-inflammatories (green tea, cucurmin, fish oil, CoQ10, decreasing sugars), lysine, and anti-virals (like valacyclovir and Vitamin D). Yes, Vitamin D is an antimicrobial too! Isn't this a more helpful approach?

*Dr Kate Thomsen has a holistic health practice in Pennington, NJ. She is board certified in Family Medicine and Integrative/Holistic Medicine. She has extensive training in functional medicine. For more information visit online at [www.drkatethomsen.com](http://www.drkatethomsen.com). For information about appointments, body composition program, or our upcoming detox program, call the office at 609-818-9700.*