

Alzheimer's-Like Plaque Seen on Brain Scans After Head Trauma



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New research may help connect the dots between traumatic brain injury and the risk for memory and other brain-related problems later in life.

Brain imaging technology known as positron emission tomography (PET) shows that people who have had a traumatic brain injury develop so-called "plaques" in their brain like those seen in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease, the most common type of dementia.

"Our research has shown, for the first time, that PET imaging can show amyloid deposits in the brain after head injury," said study author Dr. David Menon of the anesthesia division at the University of Cambridge, England. And these deposits can show up within hours of the blow to the head.

Previous studies have linked a history of head injury with higher odds of developing memory problems later in life, but it is too early to say that the head injury is the cause. "Patients can be imaged with PET to detect early amyloid

deposition, and then followed up to see whether this early amyloid deposition resolves, whether it recurs, and how these processes relate to later cognitive [mental] decline," Menon said.

For this study, researchers used PET imaging to look at the brains of 15 people with traumatic brain injury and 11 healthy individuals with no history of brain trauma. The images were taken between one day and close to a year after the head injury.....

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