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£1.2m stroke patient study to probe disease links with dementia

Stroke patients are set to benefit from a major study to investigate links with dementia.

The £1.2 million project aims to improve how doctors identify and treat dementia that occurs following a stroke.

Researchers will track changes in memory and thinking skills in more than 2000 stroke survivors over a two-year period.

They hope to shed light on the causes of dementia in stroke patients and identify warning signs that could help predict which patients are likely to be affected.

The study also aims to identify potential therapies to slow or prevent the onset of dementia symptoms in stroke survivors.

Vascular dementia occurs when the brain is damaged because of problems with its blood supply. It is the second most common type of dementia after Alzheimer's disease.

The condition is strongly linked to stroke – estimates indicate that as many as one in three people who survive a stroke will develop dementia within five years.

Nine leading UK universities are taking part in the study, led by the University of Edinburgh.

Participants will give blood samples, undergo brain scans and complete regular tests to assess their memory and thinking skills.

They will also be asked to share information about tiredness, mood and ability to cope with daily life.

The study involves experts from the Universities of Edinburgh, Cambridge, Glasgow, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham, Oxford, Kings College London and University College London.

The research has been backed by the Alzheimer's Society, British Heart Foundation and the Stroke Association as part of a £2.2m bid to understand vascular dementia.

Ranked among the top universities in the world

Around 150,000 people in the UK are living with vascular dementia. Experts estimate that the figure could rise to 350,000 by 2050.

Lead researcher Professor Joanna Wardlaw, Chair of Applied Neuroimaging at the University of Edinburgh, said: “By comparing those who develop vascular dementia after stroke with those who don’t, we hope to find out what causes the condition, and find a way to prevent it.”

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