

Australian study suggests protective effective of intermittent fasting against dementia

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Researchers from the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Hospital in Australia are leading a study examining whether intermittent fasting can reduce the risk of developing dementia.

Intermittent fasting, also known as time restricted eating, involves longer than usual intervals between meals which can vary from 12 to 24 hours. Items which do not give calories, for example, black coffee without sugar, can be consumed during this interval.

Researcher Dr Alby Elias, from the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, said time restricted eating has been shown to have several health benefits.

“We know that intermittent fasting has a range of benefits for several health conditions, including obesity, arthritis, diabetes mellitus and high blood pressure. Little is known about the role of time-restricted eating in dementia risk reduction,” Dr Elias said.

“Animal studies have demonstrated that intermittent fasting was associated with removal of the beta-amyloid protein from the brain, the hallmark of Alzheimer’s disease,” Dr Elias said.

Alzheimer’s disease is the cause of the most common type of dementia. Dementia affects almost 50 million people worldwide. The study, funded by the Dementia Australia Research Foundation, will involve focus groups such as family members of people affected with dementia and will first engage with the community and clinicians to work out the duration of fasting.

They will investigate the feasibility of time-restricted fasting and later measure how intermittent fasting affects memory function, body weight, lipids, blood pressure and biomarkers of dementia in humans. The Melbourne-based study will last one

month and will involve 25 participants undertaking a time-restricted diet.

“If the results are positive, then hopefully we will see the adoption of intermittent fasting into the healthy lifestyle to reduce the risk of dementia”, said the researchers.