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Protein triggers Alzheimer's memory loss

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United Press International

Wednesday, March 2, 2005

IRVINE, Calif., Mar 02, 2005 (United Press International via COMTEX) -- A protein that builds up on neurons in the brain marks the onset of memory decline associated with Alzheimer's disease, researchers said Wednesday.

Accumulation of the protein, beta amyloid, is the trigger that fires the loss of memory in the degenerative disorder that currently affects as many as 5 million American adults, concludes a study by the University of California Irvine.

Alzheimer's sufferers are unable to clear the excess protein buildup that healthy brains can remove.

Researcher said the discovery underscores the need to develop methods to keep the memory-robbing beta amyloids from building up in one's brain.

Without effective therapies, researchers said it is estimated the number of Americans suffering from Alzheimer's will jump to 13 million by 2050.

The research is reported in the journal Neuron.

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Date last updated: 03 March 2005