

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: The Oregon Brain Aging Study

The Oregon Brain Aging Study focuses on healthy brain aging to determine factors that may confer resistance to cognitive decline in aging. "Average healthy" oldest old were found more resistant to dementia at advanced age than those "exceptionally healthy."

Lead Agency:

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Agency Mission:

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

Principal Investigator:

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Partner Agency:

National Institutes of Health/National Institute of Aging (NIH/NIA)

General Description:

Oregon Brain Aging Study

The Oregon Brain Aging Study is a longitudinal study focused on factors associated with healthy brain aging. Current research questions are directed toward establishing biomarkers of brain aging protection associated with a recently identified, resistant to cognitive decline phenotype among the oldest old, and determining how these biomarkers map to rates or trajectories of functional decline prior to the emergence of dementia. Finally, the study ultimately focuses on establishing whether the resistive phenotype of cognitive decline and brain aging is associated with distinct neuropathology.

This study will establish the different characteristics of neuropathology in two groups of healthy oldest old patients, those that do and do not develop dementia.

Effectiveness: What is the impact and/or application of this research to older persons?

This study will establish biomarkers in blood that may predict early stages of neurodegeneration leading to cognitive decline. The identification of these biomarkers, in aged individuals with and without the development of dementia, may also provide insights to the mechanism(s) that contributes to the normal and abnormal brain aging.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

To date, there are no reliable blood biomarkers that can predict the development of dementia. With the identification of these biomarkers, it will be possible to identify individuals in the very early stages of the development of dementia. Early diagnosis is important for physicians to identify treatable causes of dementia, to effectively manage dementia and related illnesses, and to offer support services to the patient and family.