

# Putting Marketing Before Science: Mainstream Media's Hying of New Drug for Alzheimer's

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*The results of a clinical trial for lecanemab, an experimental drug that is claimed to slow the destruction of the brain in Alzheimer's disease, have been hailed by the mainstream media as a 'momentous breakthrough.' This is despite the fact that the drug's effect is very small, it can only be used in the early stages of the disease, and its likely impact on patients' daily lives is highly questionable. With the treatment also carrying a risk of dangerous side effects, including death, shouldn't we be hearing instead about the proven effectiveness and safety of natural therapies for dementia?*

A monoclonal antibody treatment given by intravenous infusion, lecanemab was developed by Eisai, a pharma company based in Tokyo, and Biogen, a biotech company based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Designed to attack the clumps of amyloid, a protein, that build up in the brains of Alzheimer's patients, the drug is intended to be administered to sufferers every two weeks. But with its price per patient reportedly expected to be up to \$35,605 per year, the treatment seems unlikely to be either easily affordable or available to all.

Patients receiving the drug deteriorated almost as much as those not given it

The [study results](#) promoted by the mainstream media were published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The trial involved a total of 1,795 patients with early-stage Alzheimer's, 898 of whom received the drug with the rest being given a placebo.

Prior to the study, the participants were estimated to have an average clinical dementia rating of around 3.2, as measured on an 18-point evaluation scale, with higher numbers indicating greater cognitive impairment. After 18 months, the clinical dementia rating for patients treated with lecanemab had worsened by 1.21 points, with the rating for the placebo group worsening by 1.66 points.

In other words, the deterioration experienced by Alzheimer's patients receiving the drug was only fractionally less than that of those who received no treatment at all. Despite this

unimpressive outcome, much of the mainstream media's reporting was misleadingly triumphalist.

[‘Alzheimer’s drug lecanemab hailed as momentous breakthrough,’](#) screamed the UK’s *BBC*. *Sky News* described the study as a [‘Historic moment in Alzheimer’s treatment’](#) and a ‘game changer,’ while the UK’s *Guardian* newspaper claimed that lecanemab [‘looks like the real deal.’](#) *The National*, an English-language newspaper published in the United Arab Emirates, even went so far as to conclude that the drug was the [‘beginning of the end’](#) for Alzheimer’s. Beneath these deceptive headlines, however, lecanemab’s side effects turn out to be far from trivial.

## Dangerous side effects including death

Brain scans showed that 17 percent of the patients receiving lecanemab suffered brain bleeds, with 13 percent experiencing swelling of the brain. Other adverse effects reported included confusion – a symptom clearly not desirable in the treatment of Alzheimer’s. Even more worryingly, however, the drug has also been linked to [deaths](#).

Given the negligible difference lecanemab apparently makes in slowing patients’ deterioration, many observers doubt that its impact on the lives of sufferers will be significant. Quoted on the [NPR website](#), Dr. Madhav Thambisetty of the U.S. National Institute on Aging pointed out that the drug only had a “very small” effect. “It’s very unlikely that these differences are going to be noticeable by individual patients in their everyday lives,” he predicted.

What the mainstream media completely omitted to mention, however, is that effective, safe natural approaches to treating Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of dementia already exist.

## Natural approaches to preventing and treating Alzheimer’s

A study published in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (AJCN) in 2015 demonstrated that certain micronutrients can actually [halt the development of Alzheimer’s disease](#). Carried out over a period of two years by scientists at the University of Oxford in the UK, it followed 168 elderly people and showed that, for participants with high levels of omega-3 fatty acids, a combination of B vitamins prevented brain shrinkage, a hallmark of the devastating condition.

Lead researcher Professor David Smith described the AJCN study’s finding as “very exciting and important,” explaining that “something so simple as keeping your omega-3 levels high and supplementing B vitamins if you are at risk could dramatically reduce a person’s risk.” He added that patients showing early signs of dementia should immediately be given omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins B6 and B12, and folic acid.

Other researchers have reached similar conclusions. A scientific review published in the *Open Biology* journal in 2020 described how evidence is accumulating that, through taking advantage of their synergistic effects, [combinations of antioxidants](#) may be effective not only in preventing Alzheimer’s disease but also in reversing it. Advising combining antioxidant supplements with a nutrient-rich diet, the researchers stated that such an approach may also be effective against other neurodegenerative diseases.

With additional research similarly emphasizing the important roles of [B vitamins](#) and [vitamin](#)

[C](#) in the prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's, the [beneficial effects of nutrition](#) for improving cognitive function and dementia are becoming increasingly clear. Meantime, however, with its blatant hyping of the lecanemab study results, the mainstream media remains focused instead on promoting the marketing interests of the drug industry. In doing so, it is deliberately giving false hope not just to patients, but also their families and doctors.

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