

Good Morning,

As we head into a rainy weekend in the east, the remnants of a tropical storm passing through southern/eastern Ontario and into Quebec and the Maritimes gives our lawns a good fall soaking. Fortunately ahead of it was summer-like temperatures so yours truly enjoyed a golf game in shorts on Thursday in near perfect, windless warm weather. The markets seemed to catch a warm tradewind in the latter part of the week and have now recovered more than half of September's nearly 5% retreat from all-time highs.

It is encouraging as the years go by to see the scientific community making headway on the diseases that are cutting too many lives short, or stealing quality of life from folks too young.

“The discovery that the **human papillomavirus can cause cervical cancer proved to be similarly controversial**, but **vaccines against the infection** are now saving thousands of lives. Scientists today estimate that around **12% of all human cancers are caused by viruses**.

We may be witnessing a similar revolution in our understanding of Alzheimer's Disease. Lifestyle and genetic factors certainly play a role in the development of the illness. But it looks increasingly possible that some common viruses and bacteria – the kinds that give us cold sores and gum disease – may, over the long term, trigger the death of neural tissue and a steady cognitive decline. If so, infections may be one of the leading causes of the dementia.”

As we live longer, Alzheimer's/dementia are becoming increasingly common conditions and for those of us who have seen a friend or loved one go through it, it's just awful to watch and hard on everyone involved. Could viruses play a major role in causing dementia, and could that lead to better treatment and prevention outcomes?

Ruth Itzhaki, an emeritus professor at the University of Manchester in the UK, has spent three decades investigating the role of infection in Alzheimer's.

“Itzhaki has led the way with her examinations into the role of the herpes simplex virus (HSV1), which is most famous for causing cold sores on the skin around the mouth. Importantly, the virus is known to lie dormant for years, until times of stress or ill health, when it can become reactivated – leading to a new outbreak of the characteristic blisters.

In the early 1990s, however, Itzhaki's examinations of post-mortem tissue revealed that a **surprising number of people showed signs of HSV1 in their neural tissue...**”

This virus, combined with a specific gene variant APOE4, makes it 12 times more likely that a person will develop Alzheimer's, a significant finding.

So what does this mean going forward?

“To date, the most compelling evidence for the infection hypothesis comes from **a large study in Taiwan, published in 2018, which looked at the progress of 8,362 people carrying a herpes simplex virus**. Crucially, some of the participants were given antiviral drugs to treat the infection. As the infection hypothesis predicted, this reduced the risk of dementia. Overall, those taking a long course of medication were around **90% less likely to develop dementia over the 10-year study period** than the participants who had not received any treatment for their infection.”

"It's a result that is so striking, it's hard to believe," says Anthony Komaroff, a professor at Harvard Medical School and a senior physician at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, who recently **reviewed the current state of the research into the infection hypothesis for the Journal of the American Medical Association.**"

This type of work becomes increasingly germane post-Covid pandemic, as the long term effects of Covid 19 are not yet known, but could also predispose those who had the virus to diseases like Alzheimer's in the future.

It is indeed encouraging to see scientists like Dr. Itzhaki persisting in their work despite nearly 2 decades of skepticism from her peers in the scientific community. Turns out, she was on to something nearly 30 years ago.

Link to article below:

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20211006-what-if-dormant-microbes-trigger-alzheimers?ocid=ww.social.link.email>

Have a good weekend.

*-Penned by Trevor Johnson*

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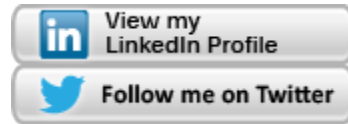
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