



Peter Bristol of Wakefield, R.I. leaves Butler Hospital in Providence, R.I., after receiving an intravenous infusion. AP

Healthy seniors tested in bid to block Alzheimer's

By LAURAN NEERGAARD
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — In one of the most ambitious attempts yet to thwart Alzheimer's disease, a major study got underway Monday to see if an experimental drug can protect healthy seniors whose brains harbor silent signs that they're at risk.

Scientists plan to eventually scan the brains of thousands of older volunteers in the U.S., Canada and Australia to find those with a sticky build-up believed to play a key role in development of Alzheimer's — the first time so many people without memory problems get the chance to learn the potentially troubling news.

Having lots of that gunky protein called beta-amyloid doesn't guarantee someone will get sick. But the big question: Could intervening so early make a difference for those who do?

"We have to get them at the stage when we can save their brains," said Dr. Reisa Sperling of Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, who is leading the huge effort to find out.

Researchers are just beginning to recruit volunteers, and on Monday, a Rhode Island man was hooked up for an IV infusion at Butler Hospital in Providence, the first treated.

Peter Bristol, 70, of Wakefield,

Rhode Island, figured he was at risk because his mother died of Alzheimer's and his brother has it.

"I felt I needed to be proactive in seeking whatever therapies might be available for myself in the coming years," said Bristol, who said he was prepared when a PET scan of his brain showed he harbored enough amyloid to qualify for the research.

"Just because I have it doesn't mean I'm going to get Alzheimer's," he stressed. But Bristol and his wife are "going into the situation with our eyes wide open."

He won't know until the end of the so-called A4 Study — it stands for Anti-Amyloid Treatment in Asymptomatic Alzheimer's — whether he received monthly infusions of the experimental medicine, Eli Lilly & Co.'s solanezumab, or a dummy drug.

Solanezumab is designed to help catch amyloid before it builds into the brain plaques that are a hallmark of Alzheimer's. It failed in earlier studies to treat full-blown Alzheimer's — but it did appear to help slow mental decline in patients with mild disease, raising interest in testing it even earlier.

Scientists now think Alzheimer's begins ravaging the brain at least a decade before memory problems

appear, much like heart disease is triggered by quiet cholesterol build-up. Many believe the best chance of preventing or at least slowing the disease requires intervening, somehow, when people still appear healthy.

The \$140 million study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, Lilly and others, will track if participants' memory and amyloid levels change over three years.

Whether this particular drug works or not, the Alzheimer's study is being watched closely as a chance to learn more about how amyloid works and how people handle the uncertainty of knowing it's there.

"Amyloid we know is a huge risk factor, but someone can have a head full of amyloid and not decline" mentally, Sperling said. "We need to understand more about why some brains are resilient and some are not."

Before any brain scans, interested 65- to 85-year-olds will undergo cognitive tests to be sure their memory is normal. Volunteers also must be willing to learn their amyloid levels, and researchers can turn away those whose psychological assessments suggest they may not cope well with the news. Sperling expects to screen more than 5,000 healthy seniors to find the needed 1,000 participants, who will be monitored for anxiety or distress.

New regulations for CDL Medical Examiner Card

For those of you who plan to see if you are medically fit on acquiring your commercial driver's license from the State of Connecticut, new regulations have been implemented in order for you to receive the required CDL Medical Examiner Card.

As of May 21, 2014, the physical for the CDL Medical Examiner Card can only be completed by a certified medical examiner who is nationally registered with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Because of these new regulations, fewer and fewer primary care physicians are completing the strict requirements to administer these physicals. Federal law requires that a CDL holder must have a physical at least every two years.

Driving a commercial motor vehicle requires a higher level of knowledge, experience, skills, and physical abilities than drivers of non-commercial vehicles. In order to obtain a CDL, an applicant must pass skills and knowledge testing geared to these higher standards.

The MedWorks Occupational Health Program of Bristol Hospital and MedWorks Newington are affiliated with Connecticut Occupational Medicine Partners LLC and have certified medical examiners on staff who can complete this detailed physical and provide you with CDL Medical Examiner Card.

So what's included in the physical for the CDL Medical Examiner Card?

Qualifications to acquire the CDL Medical Examiner Card are now more stringent as your physician evaluates to

see if you are medically fit to drive a commercial motor vehicle. The physical includes:

- Blood pressure
- Urine test to determine sugar, blood, protein and ketones
- Height and weight
- Vision and hearing tests

HEALTHY LIVING



Laura Leonetti

Additionally, the benefit of having your physical completed by Medworks of Bristol Hospital is that if you require additional treat-

ment, you can be immediately referred to one of the specialists of the Bristol Hospital Multi-Specialty Group. Our specialists include family medicine physician Brimal B. Patel, MD, who leads the Bristol Hospital Sleep Center; rehabilitation and physical medicine expert Mark Watson, MD, and the team from the Bristol Hospital Diabetes Center.

There are numerous combinations of ailments that can interfere with a person driving a commercial motor vehicle.

Sleep apnea has a significant impact on drivers as seen in the tragic Metro-North accident that took place late last year.

To have your physical completed for your CDL Medical Examiner Card, please visit Medworks Occupational Health Program of Bristol Hospital, which is currently located at 539 Farmington Ave in Bristol and will be relocating to 975 Farmington Ave in Bristol in July. For an appointment, please call Occupational Health Nurse Laura Leonetti, RN, COHN-S, 860-589-0114. For an appointment at Medworks Newington, call Site Manager Patti Russo, RTR, 860-667-4418.