

Elderly Brains Benefit From Stable Blood Pressure

WEDNESDAY, May 17 (HealthDay News) -- A wide difference between the systolic (top) and diastolic (bottom) numbers in a blood pressure reading may be linked to poorer cognitive function in people who are 80 and older, Japanese researchers report.

Previous research had found a link between elevated blood pressure and cognitive decline over time in people ages 18 to 83. The researchers suggested that lowering systolic blood pressure by 20mmHg or diastolic blood pressure by 10mmHg would help preserve cognitive function.

Researchers at the Public Kiwa Clinic in Kumano measured blood pressure and cognitive function in 101 people receiving treatment for chronic conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, chronic gastritis, and osteoporosis.

"Although clinicians may be reluctant to treat older patients aggressively, perhaps because of perceived lower benefits or possible increased risk of medication side effects, these findings show the potential value of interventions," researcher Dr. Kenichi Sakakura said in a prepared statement.

He called for additional investigation.

"These results further validate previous indications that variable blood pressure has an effect on cognitive function in the very elderly. However, very little data exists to support these theories, and more research is needed to confirm the full impact of blood pressure on cognitive function in these patients," Sakakura said.

The study was presented Tuesday at the American Society of Hypertension's annual scientific meeting in New York City.