



Stay informed and know what's really going on.

Subscribe for 99¢.

Two common personality traits could be linked to Alzheimer's



AGING IN ATLANTA

By Kiersten Willis, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

18 hours ago

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is providing this content as part of our public service mission. Please support real, local journalism by [subscribing today](#).

A study from Florida State University researchers has found that two common personality traits may have a link to Alzheimer's disease.

FSU's College of Medicine discovered changes in the brain associated with the most common form of dementia. They discovered that certain personality traits might be associated with Alzheimer's disease — and that they are frequently visible early on in certain individuals.

The findings were published in the peer-reviewed journal, [Biological Psychiatry](#).

Explore Look out for these early onset Alzheimer's disease signs

The traits labeled “conscientiousness” and “neuroticism” have been associated with dementia and cognitive impairment before. A 2017 study published in the peer-reviewed [Journal of Psychiatric Research](#) found that conscientiousness was a significant indication of dementia progression. Conscientiousness is the wish to do work thoroughly while [neuroticism](#) is an ongoing tendency to be in a negative or anxious emotional state.

“We have done studies showing who’s at risk of developing dementia, but those other studies were looking at the clinical diagnosis,” Antonio Terracciano, professor of geriatrics at the College of Medicine, said in a press release. “Here, we are looking at the neuropathology; that is, the lesions in the brain that tell us about the underlying pathological change. This study shows that even before clinical dementia, personality predicts the accumulation of pathology associated with dementia.”

The FSU study combines data from the [Baltimore Longitudinal Study of Aging](#) and previously published work summarizing 12 studies on personality and Alzheimer’s neuropathology. Over 3,000 participants have been involved in the combined studies. The results offers more robust estimates of the links between personality and neuropathology than what’s typically offered in a single study.

In each of the previous studies, researchers found more of the proteins responsible for the plaques and tangles that characterize Alzheimer’s disease. These were found in participants who scored higher in neuroticism and lower in conscientiousness. Stronger links were also found in studies of cognitively normal people compared to studies including people with cognitive issues.

Explore How driving behaviors can indicate early signs of dementia

Results show that personality may assist in protecting against Alzheimer’s and other neurological diseases. It may do so by delaying or preventing neuropathology emergence in people high in conscientiousness and low in neuroticism.

“Such protection against neuropathology may derive from a lifetime difference in people’s emotions and behaviors,” Terracciano said. “For example, past research has shown that low neuroticism helps with managing stress and reduces the risk of common mental health disorders. Similarly, high conscientiousness is consistently related to healthy lifestyles, like physical activity. Over time, more adaptive personality traits can better support metabolic and immunological functions, and ultimately prevent or delay the neurodegeneration process.”

To get specialized news and articles about aging in place, health information and more, sign up for our [Aging in Atlanta newsletter](#).

About the Author



Kiersten Willis



Kiersten Willis is a Georgia-born native specialist for the revenue content team with The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.