

amyloid-beta-42 among the intervention group. “In the stretching group, we expected to see continuation of disease, and this was reflected in the CSF amyloid levels, which increased over 6 months. In the aerobic group, this increase appeared to be attenuated.”

Whole brain blood flow also improved significantly in the exercise group and was driven by increased flow in regions particularly associated with aging and Alzheimer’s: the superior frontal cortex, posterior cingulate, and cingulate gyrus.

“In all three regions blood flow was increased bilaterally, and these increases

were similar. This was encouraging and suggests that changes related to aging and Alzheimer’s benefited. Typically, the signature profile of aging is reduced flow in the superior frontal region, and the profile for Alzheimer’s is reduced flow in the posterior cingulate and cingulate gyrus. These are exactly the regions that were boosted by exercise.”

The cognitive measure was a compilation of several tests of executive function. “Independent of age and APOEε4 [apolipoprotein E ε-4] status, we saw significantly improved performance.”

Dr. Baker said that she is eager not only to find out how many have independently continued to exercise but also to retest them and see if the effects were transient or imparted some lasting benefit. She also plans to initiate an 18-month, phase III trial of the two interventions at 15 sites throughout the United States.

“We really hope these results will help us move this work forward,” she said.

Dr. Baker had no financial disclosures.

MICHELE G. SULLIVAN is with the Mid-Atlantic bureau of Frontline Medical News.

Age-Related Cognitive Deficits Differ by Sex

BY MITCHEL L. ZOLER

WASHINGTON — Age-related cognitive declines have a different presentation in women and in men.

As men age they show a steeper decline, compared with women, in their ability to name words from a list, to name words that start with a specific letter, and in trail-making tests, according to initial, baseline results from 587 people enrolled in an online program designed to assess and intervene against age-related declines in cognitive function.

In contrast, age-related declines among women showed up more commonly for reading comprehension, three-dimensional rotation, and clock rotation tests, Thomas Beaudry said at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference 2015. Scores on reaction time and on the Wisconsin Card Sorting Test declined with age at roughly similar rates regardless of sex.

These sex differences in rates of age-related cognitive declines in various mental function tests “suggest that careful thought needs to be put into the selection of tests used for diagnosis” of early-onset Alzheimer’s disease and other forms of age-related dementia, said Mr. Beaudry, a researcher at the McGill University Research Centre for Studies in Aging in Montreal.

Mr. Beaudry and his associates developed a website that allows registered participants to undergo assessments of their cognitive function at baseline. Participants are also encouraged to regularly play a variety of “brain games” online designed to improve or at least help maintain their cognitive function. Known as the Prevention of Neurodegenerative Diseases in Everyone at Risk (P.O.N.D.E.R.) program, it had enrolled 1,536 participants as of July, Mr. Beaudry said. The enrollees averaged 57 years old, and 79% were women.

At the time of enrollment, participants complete a panel of eight cognitive function tests. In addition to completing these assessments at baseline, participants receive follow-up requests to undergo reassessment every 6 months.

“What makes P.O.N.D.E.R. unique is the training approach” in which participants are asked to play brain games on the website, he said. The games are designed to challenge and develop the same cognitive skills addressed by the assessments. “The presymptomatic phase of Alzheimer’s disease presents a window for intervention through cognitive training to delay the onset and progression of the disease,” Mr. Beaudry said.

MITCHEL L. ZOLER is with the Philadelphia bureau of Frontline Medical News.



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