NC Registry for Brain Health Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP

Thank you for being part of the NC Registry for Brain Health! Your involvement powers vital research for healthier brains across NC! As autumn begins, we are excited to share new updates and progress with you. In this issue, you'll find:

- Major breakthroughs from July's Alzheimer's Association International Conference in London
- Fascinating findings from a UK study on how dancing protects the brain
- Upcoming community events and research opportunities near you

We hope you will join us for our Participant Appreciation Event (details in the events section). Wishing you a warm and healthy fall season.

Warmly,
Drs. Kathleen Welsh-Bohmer and Goldie Byrd

STAY IN THE LOOP!

Visit our website for updates and resources.

Follow us on Facebook to continue the conversation.

Reach out with questions or comments by email at ncbrainhealth@duke.edu.

RECENT NEWS IN BRAIN HEALTH



AAIC 2026 HIGHLIGHTS

Researchers, doctors, and other professionals gathered in London this July for the 2026 Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC). Advances in early detection of Alzheimer's disease were among the most promising science reported. In a large real-world study of more than 1,300 patients and 165 doctors, researchers found that family doctors who used an Alzheimer's blood test diagnosed the disease with nearly the same accuracy as specialists. Another study found that higher blood levels of p-tau217, an Alzheimer's-related protein, may help estimate the likelihood of developing memory or thinking problems five to ten years before symptoms appear. These tests are not yet recommended for routine screening of people without symptoms, but they may eventually help doctors identify those at risk earlier and select participants for prevention studies.

New evidence across various cultures showed that healthy lifestyle changes can positively impact the brain. In the LatAm-FINGERS study, 1,065 participants from countries in Central and South America took part in a program that integrated physical activity, healthier eating habits, cognitive exercises, social engagement, and heart health monitoring. Participants who received structured coaching and peer support showed greater improvement in memory, thinking, and reasoning than those following the program on their own. Building on this work and the U.S. POINTER study, researchers announced PROTECT-Cog, a major new trial that will examine whether combining lifestyle changes with a metabolism-focused medication, such as a GLP-1 drug, can further reduce cognitive decline.

Other findings presented during the conference addressed quality of life and brain injury. In a small clinical trial, an experimental treatment involving carefully controlled amounts of THC and CBD reduced agitation in people with advanced dementia. This treatment is still under study and should not be replaced with commercially available cannabis products. Researchers also found differences in brain structure and higher levels of depression and anxiety among retired professional soccer players, adding to concerns about repeated head impacts.

The findings from AAIC 2026 reflect progress across the full spectrum of dementia research—from protecting brain health and identifying disease earlier to improve treatment, comfort, and care. To read more, visit this link.

A DANCE BREAK FOR YOUR BRAIN



Dancing can give your body and brain a welcome boost. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) shared that even a five-minute dance break may help interrupt long periods of sitting, lift your mood, refresh your attention, and encourage more flexible and creative thinking. Dancing is especially beneficial because it combines movement with music, rhythm, coordination, memory, and emotional expression.

Research also suggests that making dancing a regular habit may provide lasting benefits. A systematic review of 27 studies involving nearly 1,400 people found that structured dance programs were generally as effective as other forms of exercise for improving psychological and cognitive health. Some studies suggested that dance may offer added benefits for motivation, emotional well-being, social connection, and certain aspects of memory. Although continuing high-quality research is needed, the findings support dance as an alternative to traditional exercise, especially when practiced regularly over several weeks. Whether you dance alone, with a partner, or in a group, a few joyful minutes can be a simple first step toward a more active and brain-healthy routine.

To read more, visit this link. The full research review can be found at this link.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Are you interested in helping us advance brain health by participating in research? We are currently connecting volunteers with studies focused on memory, aging, caregiving, and brain health. Opportunities vary and may include online surveys, educational programs, or in-person visits. For a full list of our studies, visit this link.

Study Spotlight: Black American United Memory & Aging Project (BA-UMAP)

Lead institution: North Carolina A&T State University

Study goal: To explore how social and cultural background, behavioral factors, and environments influence brain health over time in Black Americans, a group at higher risk for cognitive decline in later life. The study also examines how biomarkers found in saliva and urine, along with biological risk factors such as family history and health conditions, relate to memory and thinking.

Who can participate:

- Non-Hispanic Black adults
- Age 55 or older
- Not diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease or any type of dementia

Participation includes: Online questionnaires, remote memory assessments, and saliva and urine samples

Travel required? No. Everything is done remotely, and compensation is provided.

If you are interested in this study, you can fill out the Studies Interest Form.

ASK THE EXPERT – YOU ASKED, WE ANSWERED



Question: I am a healthy 50-year-old, APOE 4/4 carrier, with a significant family history of Alzheimer's disease on my maternal side. I exercise and eat well. What is my risk of developing this disease? What can I do to be proactive about my health and future?

Answered by: Andrea Bozoki, MD, Neurologist at UNC-Chapel Hill

Answer: The most recent information we have about lifelong risk for people who are APOE4 homozygotes comes from a 2024 study in Nature Medicine, which indicates a 60% lifetime risk for dementia at age 85. Keep in mind, this statistic is based on research from the last 30 years, a period when we had limited knowledge of how to keep our brains healthy. It does not account for any new prevention strategies that might become available before you reach age 85.

Fortunately, midlife choices significantly influence your cognitive path. You can lower your risk by managing your blood pressure, LDL cholesterol, and insulin resistance. Additionally, it is important to prioritize frequent vigorous exercise, a Mediterranean diet, avoid ultra-processed foods, and get at least seven hours of sleep (and treating sleep apnea if you have it).

Finally, socializing frequently and getting your vision and hearing checked regularly (and wearing glasses and hearing aids if you need them) are also important for brain health. The key is to continue maintaining a healthy lifestyle and managing any medical conditions. Staying informed about the latest research is also helpful, as discoveries and treatments are advancing quickly and offer more ways to delay or prevent symptoms.

Do you have questions about brain health? Submit them to us at ncbrainhealth@duke.edu.

CONNECT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY AT UPCOMING EVENTS

Dementia Inclusive Community Forum 2026
Wednesday, September 23, 2026 | 8:30 AM–2:00 PM ET | In-Person
Durham Convention Center, 301 Morgan St, Durham, NC 27701

Dementia impacts individuals, families, and communities. It's a public health and social issue, not just a personal one. This forum brings people together to understand, act, and build inclusive communities for those with dementia. Registration is free, and lunch is provided.

Questions? Contact info@dementiainclusiveinc.org. To register or learn more, visit this link.

Pedal Posse



Monday, September 28, 2026 | 6:30 PM–7:00 PM ET | In-Person
Cornwell Center, 2001 Selwyn Ave, Charlotte, NC 28207
This 30-minute Memory & Movement class was developed by a nurse specifically for people living with Parkinson's disease and their care partners. All are welcome at this fun, low-pressure class, and no prior spin experience is needed.

To register or learn more, visit this link.

Understanding LATE (Limbic-Predominant Age-Related TDP-43 Encephalopathy)

Tuesday, September 29, 2026 | 2:00 PM–3:00 PM ET | Virtual
During this presentation, Milta Little, DO (geriatric medicine specialist at Duke), will explain what is important to know about LATE. Dr. Little will share the symptoms, how the condition differs from Alzheimer's disease, and other distinct differences. The Duke Dementia Family Support Program presents this event.

No registration is required. Join the Zoom at this link.

Reflections: A Program for People with Dementia and Their Care Partners

Second Tuesdays | 2:00 PM–3:30 PM ET | In-Person or Virtual
Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2001 Campus Drive, Durham, NC 27705
The Nasher Museum of Art's Reflections program offers arts-based experiences designed for people living with dementia and their care partners. Using art as a stimulus, trained facilitators encourage conversation around what participants notice, think, and wonder. No previous experience is required! Each month, they select a new theme and feature different works of art, so repeat visitors enjoy a unique experience each time they attend. Tours are free, but registration is required. Virtual sessions are available on second Fridays from 2:00 PM-3:00 PM ET on Zoom.

Questions? Email reflections@duke.edu. You can also sign up for a tour and join their mailing list. To register or learn more, visit this link.

2026 Walk to End Alzheimer's – Triangle (Raleigh-Durham)

Saturday, October 3, 2026 | 9:00 AM ET | In-Person
Halifax Mall, 300 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, NC 27603
Held annually in more than 600 communities nationwide, the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's® is the world's largest fundraiser for Alzheimer's care, support, and research. This inspiring event calls on participants of all ages and abilities to join the fight against the disease. Our NC Registry for Brain Health will be at the Ask the Researcher table.

Questions? Email Amy Gagner at abgagner@alz.org or call 919-241-5937. To register or learn more, visit this link.



The Road Ahead: A Discussion about the Comprehensive Driving Evaluation

Wednesday, October 14, 2026 | 1:00 PM–2:00 PM ET | Virtual

This presentation will explore how memory and thinking changes affect driving, how to navigate those challenging conversations with your loved one, and what happens during a driving evaluation. Presented by Melissa Werz, OTD, OTR/L, CDRS, through the Duke Dementia Family Support Program.

No registration is required. Join the Zoom at this link.

Exercise for Brain Health

Friday, October 23, 2026 | 9:00 AM-9:20 AM ET | In-Person

129 East King Street, Hillsborough, NC 27278

Start your Friday with a quick, optional weight session at Karen's Club (Back Room), led by Teepa Snow or a PAC™ team member.

Questions? Contact info@snowapproach.org or call 984-766-7669. To register or learn more, visit this link.

NC Registry for Brain Health Participant Appreciation Event

Tuesday, January 19, 2027 | 6:30 PM–7:30 PM ET | Virtual

Join us for a special virtual celebration dedicated to you, the NC Registry for Brain Health participants! We want to thank you for your valuable contributions to advancing brain health. Our keynote speaker will be Laura D. Baker, PhD, the lead investigator of the U.S. POINTER study. She'll be sharing exciting findings from the study about an important lifestyle intervention. We'll also discuss what these discoveries mean for future brain health research and healthy aging in North Carolina and beyond. Stay tuned – agenda details will be shared in next month's eblast!

Registration opens in November 2026 and is limited to 1,000 guests. The sign-up link will be in the October eblast.

EVENTS FOR HEALTH & RESEARCH PROFESSIONALS

Adult Day Services Symposium: Care, Connection & Community

Saturday, September 19, 2026 | 9:00 AM-3:30 PM ET | In-Person
Intergenerational Center for Arts and Wellness (Generations Center), 114 W 30th Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27105

Adult day services workers need support and reassurance that they are not alone in their demanding work. Attend this event to discover resources, learn innovative ideas, share experiences, build new connections, reconnect with old acquaintances, and find inspiration to achieve success. Hosted by the NC Adult Day Services Association (NCADSA). Registration fees include a continental breakfast and lunch on site: NCADSA members $50/person; non-NCADSA members $125/person.

Questions? Contact ncadsa23@gmail.com. To register or learn more, visit this link.

Respecting Choices® ACP Core Component

September 24–27, 2026 | 8:30 AM-12 PM ET | In-Person
South Piedmont AHEC Center for Learning & Development, Building K, Classroom 17/18, 5039 Airport Center Parkway, Charlotte, NC 28208
Respecting Choices® Advance Care Planning (ACP) Core Component is an evidence-based program that helps participants learn effective communication skills and techniques to facilitate person-centered advanced care planning conversations. These conversations apply to in-person visits and telehealth. Registration is $195.

This course is required only once and is a prerequisite for registering for Respecting Choices First Steps® ACP and Advanced Steps® ACP Facilitator Certification Course. It is intended for nurses, care managers, case managers, social workers, clergy, and all healthcare professionals who assist with advance care planning.

To register or learn more, visit this link.

AAIC Advancements: Reducing Disparities in Brain Health

October 30–31, 2026 | Hybrid
Charlotte, NC and Virtual
This conference will convene leaders from academia, community organizations, government, and philanthropy to advance brain health for all. By bringing together speakers and participants from diverse disciplines, sectors, and career stages, this meeting is designed to move the field beyond understanding disparities and toward generating real-world solutions that improve brain health across communities and settings. The conference will examine brain health disparities from a range of perspectives, with sessions built around shared priorities and actionable steps.

To register or learn more, visit this link.