



A Message from Reisa Sperling, MD

It is an exciting time to be involved in the AHEAD Study. We have seen more advances in Alzheimer's disease research during the last three years than in the previous three decades, and your participation is helping to drive future progress. Together, we are answering critical questions about how to protect brain health and intervene before symptoms begin. Thank you for being such an important part of this work—we could not be more grateful for your dedication to AHEAD.

This year, we will have new resources for the AHEAD Study community to help you stay informed along your participation journey. These tools are designed to keep you connected to the latest developments and important advances in Alzheimer's disease research.



My Motivation to Look AHEAD

Laura Mendenhall, clinical translational research coordinator at the Vanderbilt Center for Cognitive Medicine, shares what motivated her to pursue a career in Alzheimer's research that led to her role with the AHEAD Study.

“My motivating factor for the AHEAD Study is the participants. I've had a family history of Alzheimer's. My grandmother on my dad's side had Alzheimer's and passed away from it. And so that's the reason why I decided to go into the AHEAD Study in the first place. And I think in each participant... in every single one of you all... I see my grandmother a little bit. And I think by getting up and continuing to come in, I feel like I'm kind of trying to fight against that awful disease that took her from me.”

Scientific Highlights from the Field of Alzheimer's Research

The AHEAD Study research team is dedicated to sharing the latest developments in Alzheimer's research with our community. Below is a summary from Paul Aisen, MD, director of the Epstein Family Alzheimer's Therapeutic Research Institute.



The 18th Clinical Trials on Alzheimer's Disease (CTAD) conference brought together 2,500+ researchers to discuss the latest findings in Alzheimer's disease and dementia research.

Results of the *evoke* and *evoke+* trials examining the effects of semaglutide in people with early symptoms of Alzheimer's disease were announced, finding that semaglutide did not slow the decline in memory loss and cognition in people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.

New findings from the U.S. POINTER study were also presented. The study evaluated adults ages 60–79 with a sedentary lifestyle and elevated risk of dementia, focusing on areas such as physical activity, nutrition, cognitive stimulation, and social engagement. Researchers reported that an intensive lifestyle intervention led to cognitive benefits in older adults both with and without evidence of Alzheimer's disease biomarkers. However, the intervention did not slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease-related biomarkers.

New Community Resources – Coming Soon in 2026

The AHEAD Study team is gearing up to announce exciting resources for our AHEAD Study community, including:

- ✓ A new video highlighting the importance of your participation
- ✓ A webinar series featuring AHEAD Study researchers from across the country
- ✓ Scientific summaries of new discoveries in the field

Please reach out to your study site coordinator for details. Resources will be posted on a soon-to-be introduced page on AHEADStudy.org called “Community Resources.”

AHEAD Study Screening Data: What It Means for the Field

The AHEAD Study research team wants participants and study partners to be the first to know about findings in the field. Below is a summary of new findings from the AHEAD Study screening process you participated in at the beginning of your study involvement.

Across more than 15,000 cognitively unimpaired individuals screened for AHEAD, higher plasma %p-tau217* levels were more common with increasing age and in those who carry the APOE ε4 genetic risk factor. Higher plasma %p-tau217 levels were also associated with amyloid* and tau* levels on positron emission tomography (PET) scans, and began to rise even before amyloid reached traditional PET positivity thresholds.

Higher levels of %p-tau217, as well as increased amyloid and tau PET, were each linked to lower cognitive performance at screening, even after accounting for age, sex, and education. Among individuals with intermediate or elevated amyloid PET who were eligible for AHEAD, tau PET showed the strongest relationship with cognitive performance, even after adjusting for those factors.

Together, these findings deepen our understanding of how blood-based and imaging markers relate to cognitive function in preclinical Alzheimer’s disease, made possible by the commitment and partnership of study participants.

* Plasma p-tau2017 is an amyloid-related blood biomarker closely associated with brain amyloid levels. %p-tau217 refers to the percentage of phosphorylated tau to non-phosphorylated tau in blood plasma.

* Amyloid is a brain protein that can build up into plaques, one of the earliest changes in Alzheimer’s disease.

* Tau is a brain protein that can become abnormal and form tangles, contributing to Alzheimer’s disease.



Q&A with Dr. Molina-Henry: The Importance of Retention

Doris Molina-Henry, PhD

AHEAD Study ACTC Recruitment, Engagement, and Retention
Unit Associate Co-Lead

Question:

Why is staying in the AHEAD Study so important?

Answer:

Every time you come in for a visit, you're helping us learn whether early treatment can help delay or prevent symptoms of Alzheimer's disease before they begin. When people stay in the study, the results become clearer and more reliable. We are so grateful for the time and effort you and your study partners have dedicated to this study. Your participation is making a meaningful contribution, and it plays an important role in helping researchers better understand early changes in the brain and how we might address them.

Question:

What message do you have for participants about the impact they are making?

Answer:

You and your study partners make this research possible. We want to ensure participants and study partners know they are our research partners and the most important members of the study team. The visits they complete are the foundation of everything we are learning. At the end of this study, we hope to understand much more about whether starting lecanemab very early may influence cognitive changes related to Alzheimer's disease. Your continued participation is critical to making that possible.

Question:

What lies AHEAD for the study and for participants?

Answer:

We are at an exciting moment in Alzheimer's research, and your involvement is helping open the door to new ways of understanding the disease. Over the past few months, we have been working on new ways to keep you connected and informed, like regional webinars and a community website just for participants. We want participants to see how their involvement is making an important difference in the field of Alzheimer's research.

Brain Game: Spot-The-Difference

Engage your mind by spotting the difference between the two images featuring a spring-themed living room. Check your answers using the answer key on page 6.

Living Room A



Living Room B



Answer Key

Items Missing from Living Room B:

1. The vase of flowers on the TV stand is missing.
2. The AHEAD Study logo on the certificate hanging on the wall is missing.
3. The flower outside of the right window is missing.
4. The yellow pillow seat on the floor is missing.
5. The hot chocolate on the coffee table is missing.
6. The book on the coffee table is missing.



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Stay tuned for the next AHEAD Study newsletter and visit AHEADStudy.org for updates on study progress, new advancements in Alzheimer's disease research, and more.