



10.09.15

No place for alarmism in dentistry as a result of new Alzheimers transmission theory

A chance finding arising out of post mortems on the brain tissue of 8 people who died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) should not on its own influence current provision of endodontics in the UK, says Julian Webber of the Harley Street Centre for Endodontics.

The autopsies of 6 out of the 8 patients found they had amyloid deposits in the brain. Amyloid is an abnormal protein and a shared biomarker of both Alzheimers and vCJD.

All 8 people had died between the ages of 31 and 51 from vCJD contracted as a result of growth hormone injections from contaminated sources, withdrawn in 1985. Today, growth hormone injections are derived from synthetic sources.

The research team from UCL led by Dr John Collinge, whose findings have just been published in Nature, say there is a theoretical risk that the amyloid protein could be spread accidentally during surgical procedures, in the same way as CJD.

Dr Webber comments: "This is a chance finding and the amyloid protein may have been present as a result of the injections of contaminated growth hormone. There is no plausible scientific basis for believing that transmission can occur from one patient to another."

"In the UK we already operate to a gold standard in endodontics, following the advice of the Chief Dental Officer in 2007, that all files and reamers should be considered as single use. This is despite there being no evidence to support the presence of CJD prions in human dental pulp. There should be no attempt to alter guidelines without further research and clear evidence."

Note to editors

For more information, contact Caroline Holland on 020 8679 9595/07974 731396