

Cytox Delves into Alzheimer's Diagnosis

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Cytox, a spin-out from the University of Oxford, is building on research carried out by Dr Zsuzsanna Nagy, a lecturer at the University of Birmingham and the company's principal scientific consultant.

Nagy's research has identified a link between the development of Alzheimer's and cell cycle abnormalities. Currently no diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is possible until a patient begins to develop dementia, when major brain damage has already occurred.

The ambition of Cytox is to develop a simple blood test to predict a person's likelihood of developing Alzheimer's. The company is already talking to pharmaceutical companies who think the approach could improve the effectiveness of their drugs.

Dr Nagy said: "There are estimated to be 15 million people worldwide affected by Alzheimer's and, with an ageing population, the number of patients is expected to increase.

"The market for prescription drugs to treat Alzheimer's is about £6bn globally, despite the fact they do not provide a cure. It is important to develop a method of diagnosing the condition before symptoms become obvious if we want to develop drugs which will treat Alzheimer's more effectively."

Since the investment the company has appointed a chief executive, Richard Hadden, and a chairman, Dr James Hawkins, who has experience with early-stage medical and biotechnology businesses in the US, one of the largest markets for Alzheimer's.

Midven led the £1.25m funding alongside NESTA (National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts) and a group of business angel investors. Cytox will use the investment to continue the research, work towards clinical testing and build a commercial management team.

Midven's investment director, Roger Wood, said: "The market opportunity in the field of Alzheimer's is huge, with 45 million people worldwide expected to be affected by 2050. The research carried out by Cytox, while groundbreaking, is very simple to understand. It could totally transform how Alzheimer's disease is viewed in the pharmaceutical marketplace."