

## **Pomegranates Reduce Brain Inflammation, Helping Protect Against Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Neurological Disease**

*By Julie Wilson, Natural News*

New research conducted by the University of Huddersfield, a public university located in West Yorkshire, England, suggests that a chemical compound found in pomegranates can slow degenerative diseases like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's.

Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia occur when brain cells become inflamed, causing them to lose their ability to function and communicate. The cells eventually die off, causing irreversible changes in the brain. Alzheimer's affects more than 44 million people globally, and is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. Those with a diagnosis typically live an average of eight years; however, some people can live up to 20 years after diagnosis depending on their condition.

Nearly everything that is known about this debilitating disease has been learned over the past 15 years, but a cure does not yet exist. Doctors can only treat Alzheimer's patients by prescribing medicines intended to help curb symptoms and impede the progression of the disease.

However, the results of a two-year study led by Dr. Olumayokun Olajide could offer new hope for those suffering from a variety of illnesses including cancer, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, dementia and other neurological diseases.

Dr. Olajide specializes in the study of herbs and other natural products. He attributes his interest in natural health to his childhood.

"African mothers normally treat sick children with natural substances such as herbs. My mum certainly used a lot of those substances," said Dr. Olajide. "And then I went on to study pharmacology!"

Dr. Olajide received his PhD from the University of Ibadan in his native Nigeria following his investigation into the anti-inflammatory properties of natural products.

Along with four PhD students from the Department of Pharmacy, Dr. Olajide isolated brain cells from rats in order to test their findings, and what they discovered is that punicalagin, a polyphenol found in pomegranates, can slow inflammation in specialized brain cells known as microglia.

Polyphenols, the most abundant antioxidants in our diets, were rarely studied before 1995, but today, evidence suggests that polyphenols greatly contribute to the prevention of

cardiovascular disease, cancers, osteoporosis and diabetes.

### **Pomegranate's anti-inflammatory properties are found in its rich pigmented skin**

Decreasing neuroinflammation helps slow memory loss in the frontal lobe, which is responsible for short-term memory. According to *Live Strong*, this section of the brain is responsible for "temporarily storing and manipulating information needed to carry out cognitive tasks such as learning," which tends to be most affected by Alzheimer's.

Similar to blueberries, the healthy antioxidants in pomegranates are stored in their skin, not the inner soft part of the fruit. Dr. Olajide and his team of researchers are unsure of how much of the pomegranate's antioxidants are required to be effective, but they are confident that producing compound derivatives of punicalagin could be the basis of a new orally administered drug designed to treat neuroinflammation.

"But we do know that regular intake and regular consumption of pomegranate has a lot of health benefits -- including prevention of neuro-inflammation related to dementia," said Dr. Olajide.

Consuming juice products made with 100 percent pomegranate, about 3.4 percent of which is punicalagin, can help slow memory loss, confusion, disorientation and other symptoms associated with dementia.

Dr. Olajide's research will be published in the latest edition of the journal *Molecular Nutrition & Food Research*. He will also be speaking about his findings at academic conferences in the year to come.

### **Pomegranates offer a variety of health benefits**

In addition to its anti-inflammatory properties, pomegranates are also known to reduce cholesterol by inhibiting inflammatory activity in mast cells, which are found in connective tissue and release histamines during inflammation and allergic reactions.

Because pomegranates contain a large number phytochemicals that stimulate estrogen and serotonin receptors in the body, as reported by *Natural News*, they can improve mood by reducing feelings of sadness and depression. Some suggest that consuming the fruit daily can even help fight chemical imbalances in the brain.

### **Additional sources:**

<http://www.alz.org>

<http://www.alz.org>

<http://www.naturalnews.com>