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Monthly news summary

May/June 2026

Research Highlights



Blood tests are moving into mainstream dementia diagnosis

The biggest story in dementia research is the rapid transition of blood-based biomarkers from research tools to clinical practice.

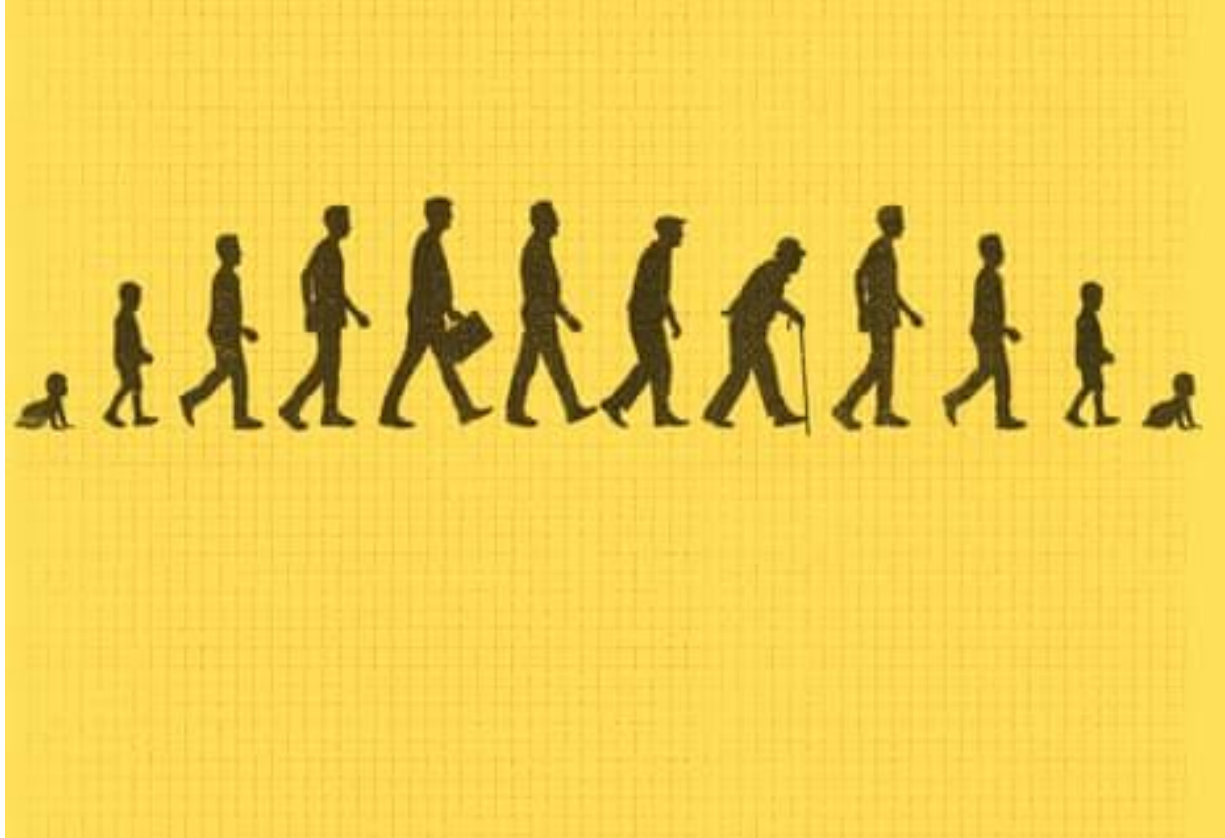
Recent studies showed that blood tests measuring proteins such as p-tau217, amyloid-beta, and related biomarkers can:

- Detect Alzheimer's pathology years before symptoms become obvious.
- Help estimate when symptoms may begin.
- Potentially identify people suitable for preventive or disease-modifying therapies. (NIH News in Health)

Researchers also reported that elevated Alzheimer's-related biomarkers in middle-aged adults were associated with worse cognitive performance years later, suggesting that disease processes may be detectable much earlier than previously thought.

(SMC España)

Why it matters: This could eventually make Alzheimer's screening and diagnosis much cheaper and more accessible than PET scans or spinal-fluid testing.



New evidence that Alzheimer's may be detectable decades before symptoms

A major May 2026 study found that blood markers associated with Alzheimer's can be detected in midlife and may reveal disease activity decades before dementia develops. (Sky News)

Researchers are increasingly viewing Alzheimer's as a disease that begins many years before memory problems appear, shifting attention toward prevention and very early intervention. (Alzheimer's Research UK)

Why it matters: Future treatments may be most effective if given before significant brain damage occurs.



Large expansion of the Alzheimer's drug pipeline

A major analysis published in May reported:

- 158 Alzheimer's drugs are currently in development.
- Eight Phase 3 trials are expected to reach key milestones during 2026.
- Researchers are targeting at least 17 different biological pathways, moving beyond the traditional amyloid-focused approach. (Alzheimer's Journals)

Areas receiving increased attention include:

- Tau proteins
- Neuroinflammation
- Immune-system pathways
- Synaptic protection
- Metabolic dysfunction (Alzheimer's Association)

Why it matters: The field is becoming much more diversified, reducing reliance on a single disease theory

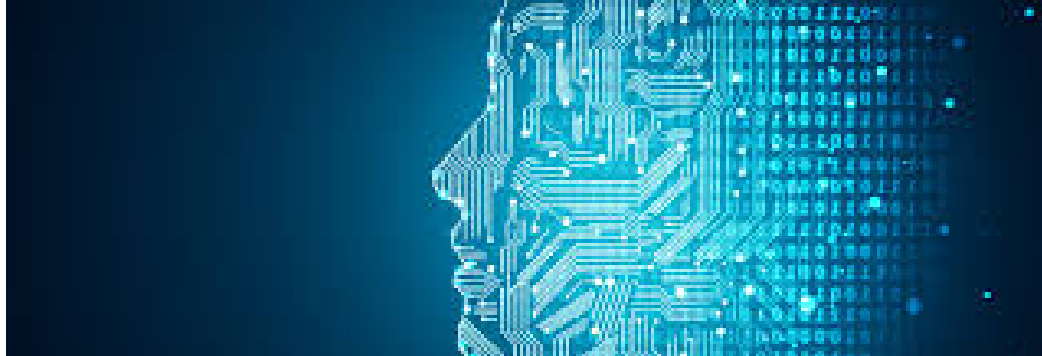


Growing interest in prevention trials

Researchers highlighted several ongoing studies testing whether anti-amyloid drugs can help people who have Alzheimer's brain changes but have not yet developed symptoms.

One of the most closely watched is the TRAILBLAZER-ALZ 3 study of donanemab in asymptomatic individuals with amyloid accumulation. Results may emerge during 2026. (Alzheimer's Research UK)

Why it matters: This represents a shift from treating dementia after symptoms appear to preventing symptoms altogether



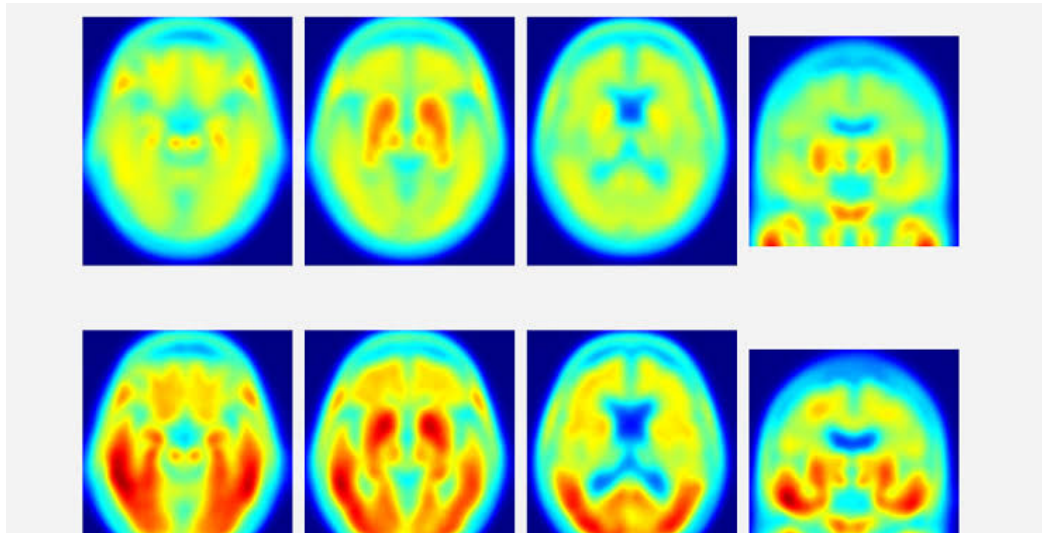
Promising animal-study breakthrough targeting brain waste clearance

Researchers at Monash University reported a copper-based compound that improved the brain's waste-removal system in mouse models of Alzheimer's disease.

The treatment:

- Reduced toxic protein accumulation.
- Improved memory performance in animals.
- May be able to move relatively quickly toward human testing because related compounds already have safety data. (Science Alert)

Why it matters: Instead of attacking amyloid directly, this strategy aims to help the brain clear harmful proteins naturally.



Tau-targeting therapies continue to advance

In May, Biogen reported mixed but encouraging results for its experimental tau-targeting drug diranersen.

Although the mid-stage study missed its primary endpoint, the drug successfully reduced tau protein levels—a key hallmark of Alzheimer's disease—and the company plans to continue into late-stage development. (Reuters)

Why it matters: Many scientists believe tau may be more closely linked to cognitive decline than amyloid itself.



Biological aging may predict dementia risk

A large study involving more than 220,000 people found that a person's biological age (estimated using blood markers) predicted future dementia risk better than chronological age alone.

People whose biological age appeared older than expected had significantly higher risks of dementia, especially vascular dementia. (New York Post)

Why it matters: It suggests lifestyle and overall health may influence dementia risk through measurable biological aging processes.



AI and digital biomarkers are becoming major research themes

Several new studies reported progress using:

- Artificial intelligence to predict disease progression.
- Longitudinal biomarker data to forecast cognitive decline.
- Digital measures and behavioral markers to identify people at risk earlier. (arXiv)

Why it matters: AI tools may eventually help clinicians determine which patients are likely to decline rapidly and who might benefit most from treatment.



Overall trend

The dominant theme of May–June 2026 dementia research is a shift toward earlier detection and earlier intervention.

Five years ago, the field focused mainly on diagnosing established dementia. Today, much of the research is aimed at:

1. Detecting Alzheimer's years before symptoms.
2. Identifying people at highest risk using blood tests.
3. Treating disease before major cognitive decline begins.
4. Expanding therapies beyond amyloid to tau, inflammation, immunity, and brain-clearance systems. (Alzheimer's Association)



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Dementia Funders Network

The Dementia Funders' Network is an independent group of individuals and organisations who support dementia research around the world.

The network will enable funders to work together to ensure their donations have greatest impact and focus. Our overall mission is to encourage more money to be invested in dementia research. [Find out more here.](#)

We hope to achieve that by providing a collaborative forum where members can share and discuss dementia projects that need financial help, find potential co-donors and keep up to date with the latest dementia research to inform considered decisions about financial investments. [Join us today](#) and help make a difference in dementia.



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