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Blood test may lead to earlier diagnosis

Speed, better accuracy could be game changer

Ken Alltucker

USA TODAY

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But experts say a new generation of blood tests may replace the expensive brain scans and spinal taps now used to diagnose the mind-robbing disease. Early diagnosis could allow patients earlier access to drugs approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat Alzheimer’s. The new blood tests may also help drug researchers more efficiently conduct clinical trials to evaluate experimental drugs aimed at staving off the incurable disease that affects 6.5 million Americans.

This week, researchers at the Alzheimer’s Association International Conference reported results from several studies evaluating these new blood tests.

Although blood tests are not yet widely deployed at memory clinics, new research suggests some of them have proven accurate and they could soon be introduced more broadly into medical settings.

“We know that blood tests have the potential to increase (the) accuracy of early diagnosis and maximize the opportunity for patients to access potential Alzheimer’s treatments,” said Rebecca Edelmayer, senior director of scientific engagement for the Alzheimer’s Association. “The field is really moving forward with the use of these types of tests.”

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