

Major breakthrough announcement expected this week on Alzheimer's drugs

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Scientists working for the US drugs company Eli Lilly are reported to be preparing a mid-week announcement regarding two new drugs they believe will prevent the brain changes that lead to Alzheimer's disease.

Scheduled to be unveiled at a major US healthcare conference, the research team are confident that solanezumab will be able to significantly slow the progress of Alzheimer's

in the brain, or else prevent it occurring completely by tackling the debilitating brain changes associated with the disease.

Professor Christian Holscher of Lancaster University comments, "I am confident some of the new approaches being taken will genuinely improve the condition and I am pretty sure we will find a cure for this terrible disease in my lifetime.

"This is an optimistic time. There are a number of interesting different trials running at the moment and I am sure some of them will produce good results."

Solanezumab works by preventing proteins becoming damaged, after computer-modelling techniques allowed researchers to identify abnormal shapes that cause them to become toxic.

Eric Karran, of Alzheimer's Research UK, says: "Current treatments only help with symptoms. They enable nerve cells to communicate with each other more effectively, but don't stop the underlying disease from getting worse. Eventually, the effect wears off as the damage to the brain overwhelms the modest benefit afforded by the drugs."

Currently dementia affects around 800,000 in the UK, with this number expected to double by 2050 as the population ages if effective cures or treatments can't be found.