The Daily Telegraph (London)

**January** 21, 2016 Thursday   
Edition 3;   
National Edition

GP records may show your risk of getting **dementia** in next five years  
  
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**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 6  
  
**LENGTH:** 453 words

NHS patients may be told their chance of developing **dementia** within five years based solely on information already in their medical records.

University College London has come up with an **algorithm** that predicts the risk, based on details already held by GPs, including age, postcode, **health** and education.

It is the first **test** that does not need extra information such as blood samples, memory checks or DNA analysis. Instead it considers known risk factors such as history of depression, stroke, alcohol intake, diabetes, irregular heart rate, weight loss, smoking, high blood pressure and social deprivation.

The developers say the **Dementia** Risk Score could give peace of mind to patients who are concerned that they may develop **dementia**, while also alerting people early enough to make **lifestyle** changes that could slow the disease's progress.

It is thought that around one third of cases could be prevented if people made changes such as giving up smoking, cutting down on drinking or exercising more. Scientists now know that vascular**dementia** in particular is linked to raised cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity, so simple**lifestyle** changes could prevent thousands of cases in Britain each year.

"Our **algorithm** can be added to clinical software systems and a practice could, for example, run this risk model on all eligible people and offer those at risk more detailed testing or specific preventive management," said lead researcher Dr Kate Walters of UCL Centre for Ageing and Population Studies. "Around a third of **Alzheimer's** disease cases might be attributable to potentially modifiable risk factors. It has been estimated that a reduction in the seven main modifiable risk factors by 10-25 per cent would prevent an estimated one million to three million **dementia** cases worldwide.

However, campaigners warned that there were ethical implications in telling people they are at high risk of **dementia**. There are currently no treatments for diseases such as **Alzheimer's** and the **test**is only 85 per cent accurate, which means 15 people in 100 would be misinformed.

Clare Walton of the **Alzheimer's** Society said: "Today's **dementia** risk score is not the first to be published, but it is the first one that doesn't require any additional data to be collected from patients. This is a huge plus.

"But without definite ways to prevent **dementia** or very accurate prediction methods, would you want to know? If I was approaching my later years, I'm not sure I would."

There are currently 850,000 people living with **dementia** in Britain, most of whom have**Alzheimer's** disease.

John Hardy: Page 16

850,000 The current number of people in Britain who are living with **dementia**. The number is set to rise to one million by 2020