

The Forgotten Clearance Systems of Alzheimer's Disease

ABSURD HEALTH INSTITUTE · 02 · Metabolic neuropsychiatry and neurological clearance · 15 OCTOBER 2026

Abstract

Neurodegeneration is often discussed through proteins that accumulate in brain tissue. This paper asks how protein and lipid clearance systems, vascular health, sleep and cerebral fluid transport might interact to shape Alzheimer disease risk and progression. The thesis is systemic but not monocausal: impaired clearance may be one part of a process that also includes tau pathology, amyloid biology, inflammation and vascular injury.

The Clinical Question and Its Context

Potentially relevant pathways include microglial clearance of debris, endothelial transport across the blood-brain barrier, perivascular exchange and sleep-associated glymphatic dynamics. Cerebral lipid metabolism is inseparable from astrocytes, apolipoprotein E and membrane homeostasis. Cerebral small-vessel disease can compromise perfusion and barrier regulation while independently worsening cognitive outcomes. Such overlapping pathways make an exclusively “one toxic protein” narrative insufficient as an explanatory framework, although the accumulation of amyloid and tau remains biologically important.

Proposed Biological or Explanatory Model

The research model separates impaired production/degradation balance from defective efflux, vascular injury and neuronal susceptibility. It suggests that two patients with similar cognitive symptoms may arrive there through different combinations of protein burden, vascular lesions and systemic disease. It also predicts that clearing a measured biomarker does not automatically guarantee restoration of lost neural circuits, particularly in advanced disease.

Mechanism-Specific Interpretation

Clearance is not a single pipe that can be opened. Proteins may be degraded intracellularly, removed by microglial activity, exchanged through perivascular routes or transported across endothelium; lipid handling has overlapping but different pathways. Meanwhile neuronal death changes the clinical significance of removing a deposit. An intervention that modestly reduces a biomarker might be biologically active yet fail to restore cognition when synaptic networks have already been lost. This creates a general research tension between preventing pathogenic accumulation, clearing accumulated material and repairing downstream injury. Each question needs a different endpoint and time horizon.

Competing Explanations and Limits of Inference

The glymphatic hypothesis is biologically interesting but measurement and causal interpretation in living humans remain contested. Associations between sleep disturbance and dementia do not establish that manipulating sleep alone reverses established disease. Nor can liver or gallbladder “detoxification” be presumed to remove brain amyloid; anatomical barriers and molecular clearance systems differ.

Discriminating Observations and Evidence Thresholds

One discriminating test is whether biomarkers of clearance predict progression after vascular lesions, baseline cognitive reserve, sleep pathology and known genetic risk are considered. Associations with poor sleep or altered CSF dynamics may still represent consequences of neurodegeneration. A convincing causal model must distinguish these temporal directions and avoid claiming clinical restoration from surrogate improvement alone.

Implications for Interpretation and Future Inquiry

A sophisticated systems paper should place disease-specific biomarkers, vascular imaging, sleep physiology and clinical function on separate explanatory axes. Readers should be encouraged to distinguish plausible mechanisms from outcomes shown in trials. This approach broadens scientific inquiry without claiming an unvalidated cure for neurodegeneration.

Selected Evidence and Further Reading

1. Mfsd2a is critical for the formation and function of the blood-brain barrier
2. Mfsd2a is a transporter for the essential omega-3 fatty acid docosahexaenoic acid

Source lineage: Terrain Medicine Handbook; neurodegeneration and body-clearance investigations

Editorial note: Conceptual scientific commentary; not an original clinical trial, systematic review, peer-reviewed publication, or medical advice. Hypotheses are not established treatment effects.