How Is Gut Health Linked to Brain Inflammation in People With HIV?

A Campbell Foundation grant helps researches answer that question as they explore HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND).

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The Campbell Foundation awarded a $77,495 grant to Cristina Granziera, MD, PhD, of Massachusetts General Hospital, who is researching the gut-brain relationship in people living with HIV.

Specifically, Granziera and her team hope to determine whether imbalanced gut microbiomes are linked to increased brain inflammation. This is an important topic, because brain inflammation can result in HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND), which are often undiagnosed and can cause problems with thinking, memory and mood.

According to a Campbell Foundation press release, the researchers will accomplish the study using noninvasive imaging (magnetic resonance imaging and positron emission tomography).

“Although antiretroviral therapy has dramatically improved the lives of HIV-positive individuals, nearly half of those who achieve viral suppression continue to suffer from HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders (HAND),” said Granziera in the press release. “Demonstrating the existence of a pathological gut-brain relationship in HIV-infected patients may open new perspectives to diminish the pathological consequences of HIV infection on the brain through the modulation of composition of gut microbiota (i.e. with changes in diet, use of prebiotics, fecal microbiota transplantation etc.) or supplementation of microbiota products.”

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