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Eye test Alzheimer's indicator

EYE tests may be a simple way to detect signs of Alzheimer's disease, Aussie researchers said yesterday.

The test is experimental and needs more study, but doctors know that Alzheimer's causes changes in the eyes, not just the brain, the CSIRO's Shaun Frost told the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in France.

The test involves photographing blood vessels in the retina, the nerve layer lining the back of the eyes. Drops are used to dilate a patient's

eyes, just as they are in a routine exam. Researchers compared retinal photos of 110 healthy people, 13 with Alzheimer's and 13 with mild cognitive impairment or "pre-Alzheimer's", who were taking part in a larger study on ageing.

The widths of certain blood vessels were different in those with Alzheimer's than in the others, and the amount of difference matched the amount of plaque seen on brain scans.

More than 35 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's.



Shaun Frost