



# Aussie eye test offers a new view of Alzheimer's

PARIS — Australian scientists are reporting encouraging early results from an eye test that they hope will create a simple way to detect signs of Alzheimer's disease.

The test is experimental and needs more study, but doctors know that Alzheimer's causes changes in the eyes, not just the brain.

Other researchers in the US also are working on an eye test for the disease.

"It's a small study but suggestive and encouraging," one of the US researchers, Lee Goldstein, of Boston University, said of the Australian

work.

"My hat's off to them for looking outside the brain for other areas where we might see other evidence of this disease."

The CSIRO's Shaun Frost discussed the test yesterday at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in France.

More than 35 million people worldwide have Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia.

Brain scans can find evidence of it a decade or more before it causes memory and thinking problems but they're

too expensive and impractical for routine use.

Doctors and families need easier ways to tell who is developing the disease, so a simple eye test could be a big help.

It 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.