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Agent Orange Causes Dementia: Independent Medical Opinion

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Recent evidence suggests that Agent Orange exposures may predispose to Alzheimer's disease (AD) and Parkinson's Disease.¹ There are now biological breakthroughs in science demonstrating what has been missing since in establishing causality of Agent Orange leading to neurocognitive decline and dementia. This contradicts the U.S. Department of Veteran's Affairs long held position that there is no causality (see Appendix A). It is well accepted that amyloid plaque collects in the brains of Alzheimer's patients.² More recent evidence suggest that medications with anti-histamine properties, like over-the-counter sleep aids and allergy pills, shut down the glymphatic system's nightly brain wash-out of these amyloid plaques. Higher plasma A β oligomer levels were found in the blood of Alzheimer's Disease patients that had been exposed to Agent Orange than those who had not.³ This landmark finding is a missing biological link to elevated amyloid plaques that build up (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. Peer-reviewed, scientific studies now demonstrate causality of Agent Orange and neurocognitive damage, including the mechanism of action of dementia.



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The Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 2008 publication was written by the Committee to Review the Health Effects in Vietnam Veterans of Exposure to Herbicides (Seventh Biennial Update) at the Institutes of Medicine.⁴ In the 2008 Update, they write “Neurologic disorders due to toxicant exposure may result in either immediate or delayed dysfunction of any component of the nervous system; immediate effects of toxicants may involve all aspects of the nervous system, whereas delayed effects are likely to produce more focal problems.” They ruled against Agent Orange causing neurobehavioral effects, while simultaneously writing that Alzheimer’s Dementia, Parkinson’s Disease, Spinocerebellar degeneration, and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis “all may be triggered by aspects of the environment, including toxicant exposure.” I opine that the reason there is not enough data to show causality is because it would be unethical to arrange a research study to prove it. The closest we can come is to recreate the conditions in a lab. Fortunately, researchers at Rhode Island Hospital, Lifespan Academic Institutions, and the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island have made progress demonstrating the mechanism of action in cell cultures and in rat models.

In 2023, Suzanne de la Monte et al. published their landmark finding under laboratory conditions, citing “Exposures to Agent Orange herbicidal chemicals rapidly damage CNS neurons, initiating a path toward AD-type neurodegeneration. Additional research is needed to understand the permanency of these neuropathologic processes and the added risks of developing AD in Agent Orange-exposed aging Vietnam Veterans.”⁵ This study supports previously denied claims that the two main constituents in Agent Orange, 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T), which independently and synergistically damage the central nervous system.⁵ Both compounds impair mitochondrial function and reduce cell viability in neuronal models, with 2,4,5-T demonstrating greater potency in causing cell death and mitochondrial dysfunction.”⁵

In 2024, Suzanne de la Monte and Ming Tong published their findings in live rat models.⁶ The rats were injected with Agent Orange and developed brain damage that clearly mimics dementia in humans.⁶ They concluded “Exposures to AO herbicidal chemicals damage frontal lobe brain tissue with molecular and biochemical abnormalities that mimic pathologies associated with early-stage AD-type neurodegeneration.”⁶



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Translating this laboratory research into an attribution claim for a Vietnam veteran that was soaking wet in Agent Orange is difficult. In the conclusion of the 2025 De la Monte et al study, they thought their doses of Agent Orange in the rats were higher than humans faced. Therein lies the disconnect. Researchers in laboratories have no idea what happens in the chaos of war. Agent Orange was dumped on top of them against regulations and they were soaked in it. This fact was concealed and the veterans that have complained this entire time were denied, until New York Times released an article titled U.S. Says Its Planes Dumped Agent Orange Near Its Bases on September 21, 1981.⁷ This was announced by Richard S. Schweiker, Secretary of Health and Human Services, at a news conference.⁷ "The number of men who came in contact with the spray "was substantially larger than anybody expected". He could not estimate how many men that was."⁷

Agent Orange absorbs through the skin, breathing and consuming it on food or surfaces.⁸

In summary, the US military jettisoned Agent Orange on an innumerable amount of military service personnel in Vietnam according to the US Secretary of Health and Human Services in 1981. Agent orange absorbs through inhalation and directly through the skin. It would be unethical to inject humans with Agent Orange to prove it causes dementia, so we rely on cell cultures and live rat models when studying toxicants. The breakthroughs came in 2023 in cell culture lines and in 2024 in the rat models, demonstrating the mechanism of action of Agent Orange and resulting increase in the flagship dementia biomarker, amyloid protein in the brain tissue that can only be collected after death. I opine that causality between Agent Orange and dementia is thus reasonably established.

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Appendix A: Standard VA Feedback about Agent Orange Since 1993

"Please have the previous examiner address the deficiencies with the examination he or she conducted on the Veteran. Neurobehavioral disorders (cognitive and neuropsychiatric) have been determined by the Secretary, based on cumulative scientific data reported by the National Academies of Science since 1993, to have no positive association with herbicide exposure. Dementia is classified as a neurobehavioral disorder, encompassing both cognitive and neuropsychiatric components. You indicated that "the rationale is the veteran was exposed to Herbicide Agent TCDD while the Veteran served in Vietnam. This has been associated with the subsequent development of dementia." However, this rationale is not sufficient in this case.

The rationale must:

1. Cite any general medical principles used to support the opinion.
2. Identify pertinent medical evidence and case-specific information relied on to support the opinion.
3. Demonstrate how the opinion was formulated.
4. Include supportive arguments for any opinions rendered or conclusions reached, with an analysis that can be considered when weighing contradictory or conflicting opinions.
5. Provide clear conclusions based upon supporting data and analysis, including a reasoned medical explanation connecting the two. Please clarify how, as a specific and individual matter, the Veteran's dementia is associated with herbicide exposure, given that the National Academies of Science since 1993 have found no positive association involving neurobehavioral disorders with herbicide exposure as a general matter.

Provide a specific, individualized rationale consistent with the five points above, to substantiate and support the opinion rendered."

Message from the Author

Flashbacks are electromagnetic waves in the body. Dozens of ancient, and several modern, techniques address the EMF wave without talking about trauma or pain at all. We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our Vietnam Veterans, not only for suffering the way the did and continue to, but for improving mental health care with the advent of the PTSD diagnosis in 1980. Since then, folks like myself have blended modern PTSD



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care with the much more effective ancient techniques that are Complementary and Alternative Medicine options for self-care. MAJ (fmr) Daniel M. Williams, M.D., P.A.