

Drug freezes dementia in its tracks

A DRUG with the potential to slow Alzheimer's so effectively sufferers never experience memory loss has been hailed as a "breakthrough".

Scientists hope the pioneering therapy, now undergoing trials, will be given to patients within five years.

Dr Emer MacSweeney, trial researcher, said: "This potentially marks a turning point in Alzheimer's treatment.

"For the first time, these final-phase trials give individuals an opportunity potentially to change their future by slowing progression of their disease and symptoms.

"Research really is unlocking answers. I would urge anyone with early symptoms to get a diagnosis as quickly as possible as the opportunity is here to change your future."

Until now the death of brain

EXCLUSIVE

By **Lucy Johnston**

HEALTH EDITOR

cells in Alzheimer's, the most common cause of dementia, has been unstoppable.

Current drugs can only help by stimulating dying brain cells to function more efficiently.

The new drug, being tried on more than 5,000 patients worldwide, has been shown to slow Alzheimer's by keeping brain cells alive.

Initial trial results were presented last week at the Alzheimer's Show in London.

The BACE inhibitor, taken as a pill, appears to reduce the production of amyloid protein – the substance which kills brain cells – by 85 per cent.

Other data, also unveiled at the event, showed a separate, monthly infusion of a new

monoclonal antibody slows disease progression by as much as a third by clearing abnormal amyloid protein.

Scientists believe that used together the drugs could significantly delay or even halt progression of Alzheimer's.

Dr MacSweeney told an audience: "Run, don't walk if you get a diagnosis. The earlier the better. Clinical trials are recruiting now. Don't miss the opportunity."

Dr Clare Walton, research manager at the Alzheimer's Society, said: "All currently available Alzheimer's treatments only alleviate the symptoms, so drugs that treat the underlying causes of the disease are desperately needed and could improve the lives of millions worldwide.

"We await the final results of this study with interest."