The Extra Point

by Jerry Roberts

976 Are You Ready to Grow Brain Cells?

If you ate less frequently, would that improve your memory? I'm Jerry Roberts, and a lot of life depends on brain health. We'll get into this topic, next, on The Extra Point.

We've discussed how sleep may impact our brain health. We've also talked about intermittent fasting, and how eating less frequently, or taking scheduled breaks from eating might help us lose weight.

Today, we take a brief look at a British study that questioned whether intermittent fasting would increase the development of new hippocampal neurons, and thus improve memory performance. It focused on brain genes known as klotho.

It was a three-month project, and laboratory mice were divided into three groups. The first, the control group, was fed normally with no changes. The second, the calorie-restricted group, was fed 10% less. The third group also was fed 10% less, but with intermittent fasting, was fed every other day.

The significance of the study is to see if humans can spur greater levels of neurogenesis, that is, the growth of new brain cells, through adjustment in lifestyle factors such as diet. We're just scratching the surface here, but what if changes in those lifestyle factors could eventually heal damage done to the brain over a lifetime?

The results of the study, released in the journal, *Molecular Psychiatry*, were eye-opening. The intermittent fasting group had improved long-term memory retention, compared to the group that had been fed fewer calories.

Dr. Sandrine Thuret, who leads the Adult Neurogenesis & Mental Health Laboratory at King's College in England, said the study suggests that "Intermittent fasting is an effective means of improving long-term memory retention in humans."

Well, the study was with mice, but it's progress. The way things work in the world of scientific research is that Thuret and others involved in this project can now waive those results around, and hopefully gain interest and additional funding to pay for the next study, and so on.

Dr. Thuret indicated that intermittent fasting isn't the only factor that can influence neurogenesis, She offered several activities that both encourage and discourage neurogenesis.

The encouragers, where more brain cells are grown: Sleep, sex, and running.

The discouragers, where fewer brain cells are developed: Sleep deprivation, aging, and stress.

Eating flavonoids and Omega-3 fatty acids, such as dark chocolate, blueberries, and fatty fish like salmon, gives us more neurogenesis.

Drinking alcohol, sorry Ray, brings less neurogenesis. Unfortunately, the old joke that alcohol isn't good for brain cells, is true.

This study has added one more factor to ramp up neurogenesis, the spacing out of meals through intermittent fasting.

So, eat a little less and a little less often, and you too can grow brain cells.

That's the Extra Point. Be responsible and make something good happen today. For 93.3 and the Ray Gibson Show, I'm Jerry Roberts.

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