New Study Further Proves the Cognitive Benefits of Bilingualism

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The largest study to date on bilingualism's effects on mental decline has revealed that speaking two or more languages might delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease and dementia symptoms by an average of 4.5 years, NPR reports. Published in the journal Neurology, the study looked at data from 648 patients, of which 391 were bilingual in Hyderabad, India, an ethnically mixed region where most people are routinely exposed to at least three languages in daily life. The location of the study allowed researchers to look at the effects of bilingualism on the brain free from confounding factors such as immigration, environmental risks and education. Findings support the hypothesis that the constant need for a bilingual person to selectively activate one language and suppress the other leads to better control of attention and improved resolution of inhibition and conflict. This, in turn, could help protect these same functions in the long run.

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