

- Brain—diseases

Dementia – the eyes may have it

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A DEEP look into the back of a person’s eye may provide an early warning of their risk of dementia and a chance to try to prevent the deterioration.

Melbourne scientists have discovered that by mapping the thickness of the layers of a retina they can identify those likely to develop the disease decades before they have symptoms.

The discovery by Monash University’s National Centre for Healthy Ageing was an unexpected one as the researchers were originally studying sets of twins for clues about the relationship between diabetes and brain health.

Instead, they noticed a deterioration in the layers of nerves in a person’s retina provided warning their brain was also at risk of deteriorating.

The research is in its infancy but Velandai Srikanth said it opened the possibility to one day using eye scans with other markers, such as blood and gene tests, to identify those needing preventive efforts to lower the risk of dementia.

“There are many things we can do to prevent the risk of dementia, such as a good lifestyle, physical activity, social engagement,” Professor Srikanth said.