World leading Stockholm medical research centre, the Karolinska Institute, has become the first to report positive results of a vaccine that could potentially prevent Alzheimer's disease, a form of dementia expected to affect huge numbers of people as the global population continues to live longer.

The vaccine could be on the market within five to six years, the professor leading the study told The Swedish Wire.

There is currently no cure for Alzheimer's disease, which is a progressive form of dementia that robs sufferers of their memory and affects speech and movement before ultimately leading to death.

Professor Bengt Winblad, of the institute's Alzheimer's Disease Research Centre in Huddinge, said the new findings - which were published in the medical journal, the Lancet - give hope to patients suffering from the disease.

"One reason that the study created such enormous sensation is certainly the great need for a treatment that will arrest the disease," Winblad told The Swedish Wire.

"The procedure now will be to perform phase two and three larger trials.

"The vaccine could be on the market within five or six years, at the earliest".

The study was carried out in collaboration with leading neurologists in the Swedish Brain Power network and financed by Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis.

"The Alzheimer's disease research in Stockholm is internationally recognised and on the frontline of translational Alzheimer's research," Winblad said. "The reason for that is that we have recruited leading neuroscientists in the field and that there is an intimate collaboration between clinical and basic researchers."

According to the World Health Organisation, dementia is the fastest growing global health epidemic of our age, and experts predict that it will continue to put a huge strain on health care systems across the world.

Alzheimer's disease was first described by German psychiatrist and neuropathologist Alois Alzheimer in 1906, and was subsequently named after him.

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