

New light technique could detect early Parkinson's disease

A light as bright as a million-watt bulb could help identify early signs of Parkinson's disease, British researchers have said.

Researchers from Keele University in the UK reported to the American Academy of Science conference that a synchrotron or Diamond Light Source could spot changes in the brain cells that are affected by Parkinson's Disease very early in the process.

The light source detects changes in metal ion levels, particularly iron, in individual brain cells that are affected by the disease. The device is a large doughnut-shaped particle accelerator, the size of five football pitches, which fires particles at just below the speed of light, focusing them into a beam less than a single cell in diameter.

The team hope that the discovery can help doctors detect early Parkinson's Disease using MRI scans. Parkinson's Disease is not usually detected until there has been significant damage to and death of the affected cells.

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