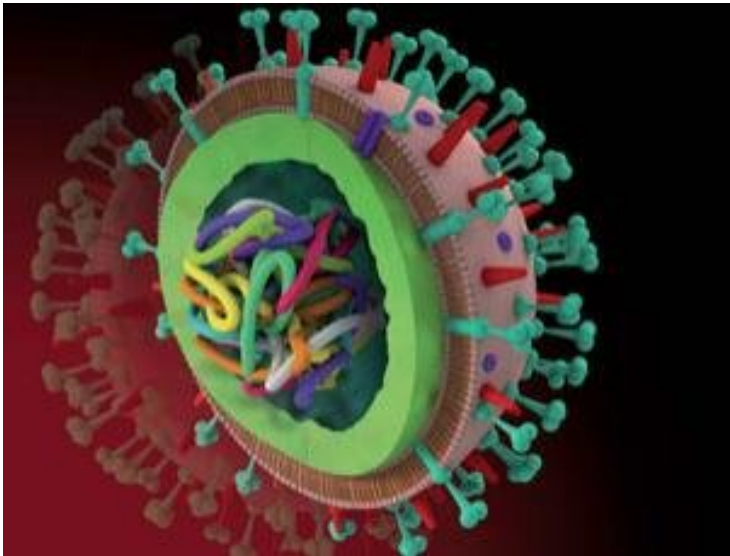


A virus that can make you stupid!

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A virus that can make you stupid!



Researchers from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and the University of Nebraska, have identified a new algal virus known as ATCV-1 from throat swabs of healthy volunteers. This virus is found to impair mental thinking capacity, brain activity, learning and memory, thus making one 'stupid'.

Reportedly, the chance discovery happened when the scientists were conducting a study on throat microbes. The team led by Dr Robert Yolken said the virus was completely new and after various database checks, it was found to lessen mental capacity.

Typically, ATCV-1 infects a species of green algae found in lakes and rivers, and has not previously been known to infect humans. However, when Dr Yolken's team had conducted a screening of a group of 92 healthy volunteers to evaluate cognitive function, the virus was found to be present in 43.5 percent of them.

Further study conducted on the volunteers found that 10 percent of the people performed worst on tests analyzing visual processing speeds. Researchers also found that the presence of the virus was linked to lower attention spans and decreased spatial awareness, and a "statistically significant decrease in the performance on cognitive assessments of visual processing and visual motor speed."

Research in animals also echoed the human findings as the infected animals took 10 percent longer to find their way out of mazes and spent 20 percent less time exploring new objects than uninfected mice. The team also said that though the virus appeared to be non-contagious, further research was needed to determine how the virus was present in such large abundance in the population.