



COLLECTING STORIES!

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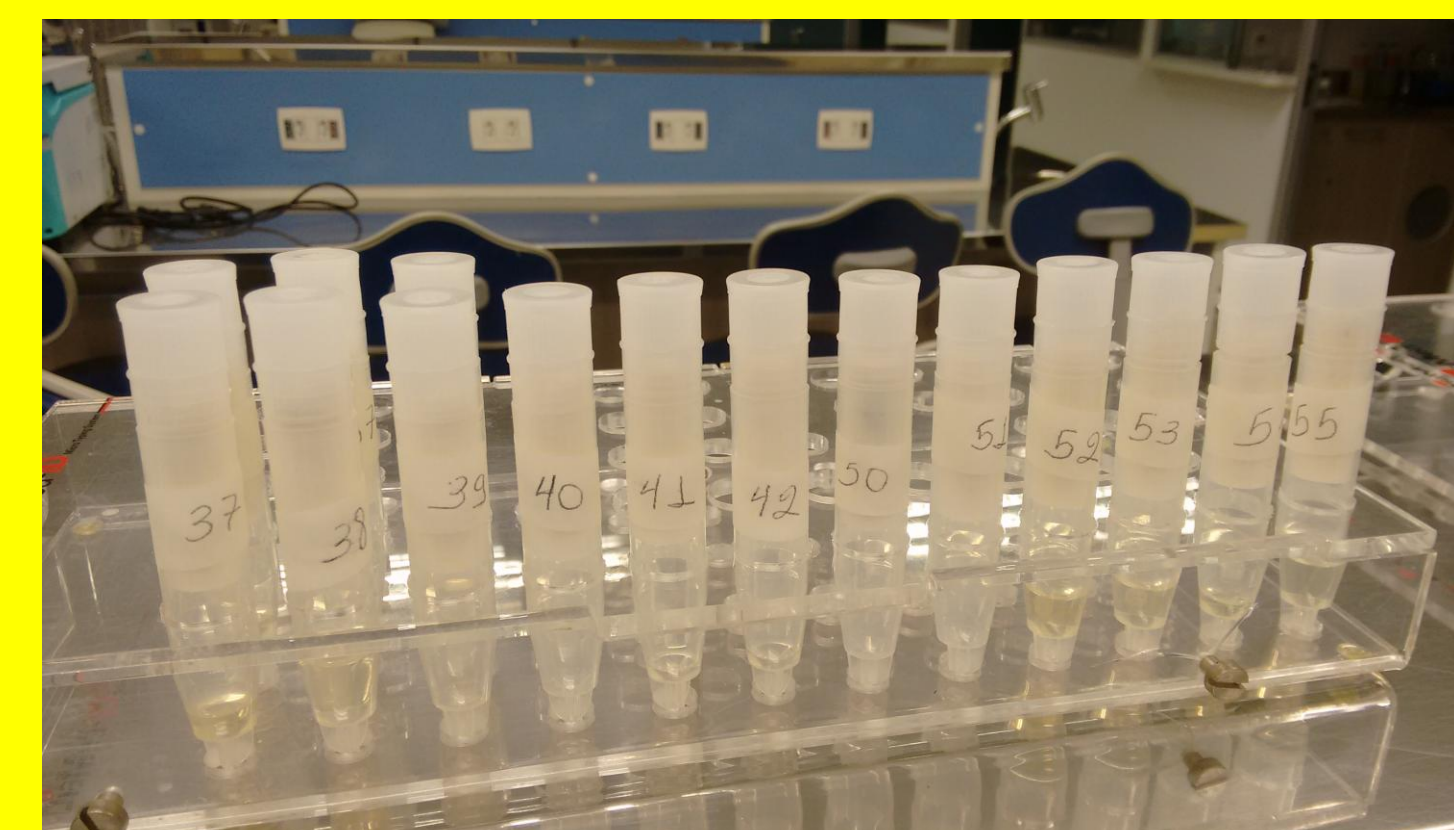
BACKGROUND

Since 2007, my life as a researcher has been deeply intertwined with Alzheimer's disease. What began as a scientific pursuit gradually evolved into a profoundly human journey—one shaped not only by protocols and data, but by distance traveled, stories heard, and lives encountered. Throughout my academic path, I collected biological samples from 120 individuals during my master's degree, 90 during my doctoral research, and 76 during my postdoctoral training. Each sample represented far more than a number; it carried a personal history. These years of research required traveling thousands of kilometers, often to meet individuals and families facing the realities of dementia. I listened to stories of people who once held positions of leadership and responsibility, built successful careers, accumulated wealth, and nurtured family lives filled with purpose and identity. Many had been defined by their roles, achievements, and autonomy. Yet, when dementia emerged, much of what society associates with meaning seemed to fade abruptly. What struck me most was not only the progression of cognitive decline, but the existential transformation it imposed.



Results in our lives!

- Having worked with the elderly in a long-term care facility since 2007—and having pursued a Master's degree, a Doctorate, and postdoctoral studies—the experiences I have lived and the knowledge I have gained are unforgettable. I am deeply grateful to the patients, my supervisors, and the many people I have met along this journey.



Conclusion of this journey, which continues...

- As memory, language, and the capacity for recognition slowly dissolved,
- titles, possessions, and social status lost their relevance. In their place remained what truly mattered: human connection. A spouse holding a trembling hand, a child repeating a familiar name, a caregiver offering patience and presence. Dementia exposed, with painful clarity, the fragility of values we often take for granted. As a scientist, I was trained to seek rigor, objectivity, and measurable results. Yet, these encounters taught me lessons that no dataset could fully capture. They taught me humility. They revealed that science does not exist in isolation—it is grounded in trust, vulnerability, and dignity. Every signed consent form and every collected sample was an act of courage and hope. Over time, Alzheimer's research reshaped my understanding of life. It taught me to value moments over achievements, relationships over status, and presence over permanence. Beyond the data, this journey reminded me that when memory fades, what truly endures is our shared humanity.

The author declares a conflict of interest: science, respect, and human dignity must always go hand in hand.

