

Interactive web programme boosts brain power in mild Alzheimer's disease

[A randomised pilot study to assess the efficacy of an interactive, multimedia tool of cognitive stimulation in Alzheimer's disease

L Tarraga et al JNNP October 2006]

Stimulatory activities, such as music therapy, arts and crafts, and exercise are more effective at boosting the brain power of patients with mild Alzheimer's disease than just drugs alone. But researchers have also discovered that an interactive web based programme can boost brain power for several months, when combined with cholinesterase inhibitors and stimulatory activities.

The IMIS programme (interactive multimedia internet based system) allows "players" to carry out different activities of varying levels of difficulty throughout the day. It consists of 19 "tasks" which stimulate attention, higher knowledge, numerical ability, language, memory, and orientation.

When compared with those taking drugs alone, a 20 minute session three times a week for three months, combined with daily stimulatory activity and cholinesterase inhibitors, actually improved scores on the tests used to monitor cognitive function in Alzheimer's disease. And this boost to brain power was still evident six months later. The drug and stimulatory activity combination also boosted brain power, but this improvement had tailed off six months later.