

BRAIN TRAINING FOR HEALTHY ELDERLY: DOES IT WORK?

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Objectives :Increasing evidence suggests that “brain training” in complex reasoning skills may benefit older adults and delay the onset of cognitive impairment. A key challenge is to develop cost effective brief interventions which lead to optimal performance. Aims: Hence the major aims of this research were to examine the benefits of a brief intervention for elders, and to compare any improvements with those achieved after additional training is provided. Method: A fully randomised controlled trial was conducted with 30 healthy older adults (M = 64 years) Participants completed measures of the WASI Matrix Reasoning subtest before and after the brief intervention, and again after the extended intervention. Those allocated to training were asked to complete a two week program of sudoku problems of increasing difficulty using tactics demonstrated in guidelines provided. This was followed by an advanced sudoku program with harder problems and more sophisticated tactics. Results: A 2 x 3 (Training x Time) mixed within-between ANOVA on WASI scores was conducted. This showed a significant interaction between training and time ($F(2,56) = 5.45, p < .05, 16. = 2n$). ANOVAs conducted to examine this interaction showed that the training group improved over time. Furthermore the training group improved more after additional “brain training” was provided. Conclusion: A brief two week “brain training” program in sudoku enhanced cognitive reasoning in older adults as assessed by the WASI reasoning subtest. An additional two week advanced program in sudoku further improved cognitive reasoning. These results suggest that “brain training” may be cost-effective and beneficial.