

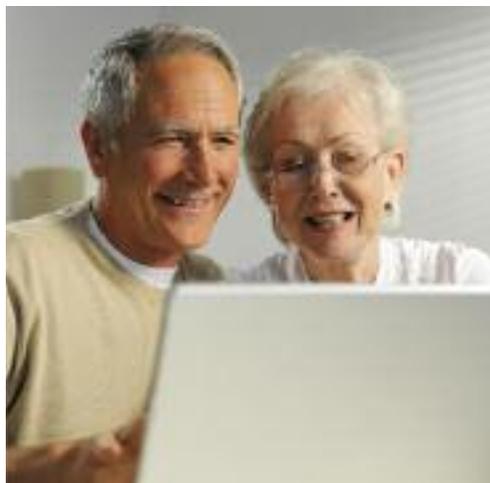
# BrainTrain Bugle

Brains Matter!

Vol. 3, No. 2

February 2017

## Live Long and Prosper with Brain Training



Brain training is not simply playing Tetris or completing crossword puzzles. The optimal brain training system is integrated within a comprehensive brain health regimen and incorporates a highly structured, progressively more challenging set of exercises starting at an appropriate functional level with clearly specified success criteria.

New research, published in last month's BrainTrain Bugle, showed the effectiveness of cognitive training in helping older adults faced with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or Alzheimer's disease (AD) maintain or improve their cognitive functioning (Fotuhi, et al., 2016). Just as people can go to the gym and exercise to improve their general health, they can use a comprehensive mental gym such as the Captain's Log MindPower Builder to stimulate neuronal growth and help build brain reserve.

Generally it takes a professional "brain coach" to maximize the effectiveness of brain training. A person who plays tennis for a half hour per week in a lackadaisical manner would not be expected to improve his tennis game very much, but an individual who works with a tennis coach and challenges himself in competitive games is likely to significantly improve his game. Likewise, successful brain training requires a commitment to regular structured practice with progressively more challenging exercises.

The underlying scientific principles of neuroplasticity have now been established in numerous research studies. The latest independent review of 26 high quality studies cites neurogenesis as the key factor in helping to prevent cognitive decline (Shah, et al., 2017). In this landmark study it was determined that at least some computerized training systems are beneficial in maintaining a healthy brain for older adults.

A previous review of 47 well-designed studies reached the same conclusion regarding the efficacy of computerized brain training for stroke and traumatic brain injury. This comprehensive review supported that a multi-dimensional set of exercises targeting working memory, attention, mental processing speed, visual discrimination and problem-solving helped to assure successful cognitive rehabilitation (Cicerone, et al., 2005). Seventy-nine percent of these studies clearly supported the clinical effectiveness of brain training; no alternative treatment modalities were more effective.

A study presented last July at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference and reported in last September's BrainTrain Bugle shows great promise for the future of brain training. This controlled study of nearly 3,000 healthy adults found that a computerized training program targeting mental processing speed and visual perceptual discrimination significantly reduced the risk of developing Alzheimer's dementia. What is truly remarkable is that after only 16 hours of brain training a person's chances of developing dementia were reduced by almost half when evaluated 10 years later. In contrast, new Alzheimer's drug development studies fail 99.6% of the time (Chemistry World, July, 2014).

The preponderance of evidence presented above, as well as over 100 published, well-controlled, peer-reviewed studies that showed improvements in a variety of cognitive and everyday activities has led the Alzheimer's Association to update its posi-

tion statement regarding brain training (BrainTrain Bugle, Sept., 2016). To minimize an individual's chances of developing dementia the Alzheimer's Association is currently recommending a healthy diet, regular exercise, life-long learning and brain training for a long and prosperous life. The simple question of whether or not brain training can be clinically beneficial has been established and is now the consensus of most clinicians in this field.

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