THE VIEWS ON ´BRAIN TRAINING´ OF HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL WITH A SPECIAL INTEREST IN DEMENTIA

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Introduction: An increasing global dementia burden in line with a rapidly ageing population drives the need for validated prevention strategies. Cognitive stimulation interventions represent promise for protecting the cognitive health of older adults. Understanding the views of clinicians is fundamental to optimising future delivery of validated dementia prevention strategies and to identify potential barriers to engagement.

Aims: To elicit the views of healthcare personnel with a special interest in dementia on the utility of ‘brain training’.

Methods: A ten-item online and paper-based survey was developed and circulated throughout specialist healthcare networks in the UK and Republic of Ireland.

Results: Of 62 surveys completed, >73% of respondents stated that they either ‘sometimes’ or ‘mostly always’ recommend brain training to people reporting memory concerns. Common recommendations included reading, paper-based puzzles, physical exercise and social/leisure activities. Evidence supporting the role of cognitive exercise in dementia prevention was rated [‘weak’-’strong’ = 1-5] by respondents: 1-2 (36.6%); 3 (45.0%); 4-5 (18.4%) respectively. A relatively low proportion (34.4%) of professionals currently recommend electronic handheld devices, largely deeming them ‘poor value’. The majority found cognitive exercise classes appealing.

Conclusions: Clinician consultation as part of the design and validation process represents best practice for addressing concerns and optimising ‘on the ground’ delivery, and potential value of, any putative cognitive stimulation strategy in the maintenance of cognitive health. Cognitive exercise classes in a social setting are a favoured clinician-supported delivery method and warrant further investigation.