

Cogmed Working Memory Training: Does it actually work? The debate continues

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Helping children achieve their full potential in school is of great concern to everyone, and a number of commercial products have been developed to try and achieve this goal. The Cogmed Working Memory Training program (<http://www.cogmed.com/>) is such an example and is marketed to schools and parents of children with attention problems caused by poor working memory. But, does the program actually work? The target article in the September issue of *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* (JARMAC) calls into question Cogmed's claims of improving working memory and addressing underachievement due to working memory constraints.

The target article authors Zach Shipstead, Kenny L. Hicks, Randall W. Engle, all from the Georgia Institute of Technology, review the research that is used to back up the claims of Cogmed. They argue that many of the problem-solving or training tasks are not related to [working memory](#), many of the attention tasks are unrelated to problems such as [ADHD](#), and that there is limited transfer to real-life manifestations of inattentive behavior. They conclude succinctly: "The only unequivocal statement that can be made is that Cogmed will improve performance on tasks that resemble Cogmed training."

"People deserve to hear both sides of the story before they invest money in products like Cogmed," says lead author Zach Shipstead.

Not all researchers agree with the arguments of Shipstead et al. For instance, in one of the commentaries in reply, Torkel Klingberg of the

Karolinska Institutet in Sweden states that "Shipstead et al criticizes these studies with three different arguments: [...] None of these arguments holds."

Two commentary authors, Charles Hulme and Monica Melby-Lervåg, who have previously questioned the evidence for Cogmed in a 2012 meta-analysis, and whose claims Cogmed directly address on their website, are firmly in support of the target article, and provide further [meta-analysis](#) in support of their shared conclusions with Shipstead et al.

"Having this debate in a scholarly journal is important because it provides scientists and the public with a more nuanced version of the truth, which percolates out of competing, evidence-based arguments," says Ronald Fisher, Editor-in-Chief of JARMAC, and professor of psychology at Florida International University.

More information: The target article is "Cogmed working memory training: Does the evidence support the claims?" by Zach Shipstead, Kenny L. Hicks, Randall W. Engle, [[dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2012.06.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2012.06.003)]. It appears in the *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, Volume 1, Issue 3 (September 2012).

The commentaries on the target article follow in the same issue www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/22113681/1/3

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