

# Training your brain to pay attention

March 24 2015

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A recent analysis has brought new clarity to the debate over whether brain training exercises can improve people's ability to pay attention in everyday life.

Dr Megan Spencer-Smith, from Monash University's School of Psychological Sciences, and Professor Torkel Klingberg from the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm – analysed the results of 12 studies, eleven of which had been conducted with participants who suffered

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

However, the meta-analysis showed that [brain training](#) also worked as a 'cure' for inattentiveness in those without the disorder.

"Subgroup analyses showed this significant effect was observed in groups of children and adults as well as users with and without ADHD, and in studies using control groups that were active and non-adaptive, wait-list and passive as well as studies using specific or general measures," the study states.

"Seven of the studies reported follow-up assessment and a meta-analysis showed persisting training benefits for inattention in daily life," it continues.

The study, published in prestigious psychology journal *PLOS One*, examined the results of Cogmed, a program designed to improve the retention and use of verbal and visual information.

Participants who completed 35 minutes of brain training, five times a week for a period of five weeks showed improved attentiveness for up to four months after training was complete.

"Cogmed and programmes like it are expensive and time-consuming, so doctors, parents and individuals will want to see bigger studies that track participants for longer," Dr Spencer-Smith said.

There was still a long way to go in proving the effectiveness of brain training, Dr Spencer-Smith added.

**UPDATE**, 4/15/2015: Please read comment "Does Cogmed Working Memory Training Really Improve Inattention in Daily Life? A Reanalysis" at: [www.plosone.org/annotation/list.action?root=85992](http://www.plosone.org/annotation/list.action?root=85992)

**More information:** "Benefits of a Working Memory Training Program for Inattention in Daily Life: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *PLoS ONE* 10(3): e0119522. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0119522](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0119522)

Provided by Monash University

Citation: Training your brain to pay attention (2015, March 24) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-03-brain-attention.html>

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