

# Brain exercise and training program to improve mind and body wellness in individuals with mild cognitive impairment

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Individuals with mild cognitive impairment have a new resource in Pittsburgh with the recently established [Brain Training and Exercise \(BRiTE\)](#) mind and body wellness program, developed by a team of clinicians and scientists at the University of Pittsburgh with expertise in cognition and behavior. The program works to stimulate the brain and body of those with known or suspected cognitive impairment with the goal of improving overall health and wellness.

"There already are effective and well-developed programs that provide home care and nursing homes that benefit individuals with more advanced disease, yet there is little available for individuals with very mild [cognitive](#) deficits," said James T. Becker, Ph.D., professor of psychiatry, neurology and psychology at Pitt. "The BRiTE program provides these individuals with the opportunity to maintain their active occupational and social lifestyles."

The BRiTE program is housed in an 800-square-foot space in Oakland, which is equipped with padded carpeting for physical activity. Stations around the room can be configured to host various classes, including cognitive strategy, music, art and yoga training among others. All activities are designed to reduce frailty, increase strength and endurance and improve balance and stability.

All program participants undergo an initial evaluation to generate a

wellness profile of physical, cognitive, emotional and social health. This profile provides a baseline, allowing the individual participants to track their progress through the program as they utilize the various cognitive and physical stimulation programs.

The BRiTE team, including Becker, Oscar L. Lopez, M.D., director of both BRiTE and the University of Pittsburgh Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and Elizabeth Skidmore, Ph.D., chairperson of the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Pittsburgh School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, have been collaborating with experts at Fundació ACE Barcelona Alzheimer Treatment and Research Center since 1998. This center pioneered a model of nonpharmacological programs to help stimulate cognitive, behavioral and physical functions to improve social and occupational functions.

Grifols International has provided funding for this new program in Pittsburgh.

"We are tremendously thankful for their support and the opportunity to provide these state-of-the-art programs in Pittsburgh," said Lopez. "The BRiTE program will provide the area's population with a new program to support [cognitive health](#) that is not available elsewhere in the United States at this time."

Provided by University of Pittsburgh

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