The effect of cognitive training in old age

Valentijn SAM, Van Hooren SAH, Ponds RWHM, Van Boxtel MPJ, Bosma H*, Jolles J
Brain & Behavior Institute, Maastricht University, Maastricht, *Department of Health Care Studies, Maastricht University, Maastricht

This paper addresses two studies, one that examines the effect of a training procedure to improve executive functioning, called goal management training (GMT), and one that examines the effectiveness of two types of memory training (collective and individual). The aim of the GMT was to teach individuals a strategy to improve planning activities and to structure intentions, and the memory training program emphasizes how memory self-efficacy works in relation to everyday memory performance, in addition to teaching memory strategies. In both interventions participants are asked to actively register memory and planning failures and successes in a dairy, in order to help them to gain insight into their functioning and to analyze their everyday cognitive problems. Other important aspects essential to optimal cognitive functioning, such as time, attention, concentration, good vision and hearing were also discussed in depth. Both designs were a randomised controlled trail that included 70 and 139 community dwelling older individuals (55+), respectively. Compared with controls, participants in the GMT were less annoyed by their cognitive failures after the intervention. Furthermore, complaints about executive functioning decreased after the intervention. With respect to the memory -training program, participants in the collective training group reported more stability in memory functioning and had fewer feelings of anxiety and stress about memory functioning. In addition, positive effects were found on objective memory functioning. Compared with the other two groups, the collective training group participants had an improved recall of a previously learned word list. Participants in the individual training group reported fewer feelings of anxiety and stress in relation to memory functioning.

Susanne A.M. Valentijn, Msc, Brain & Behavior Institute, Department of Psychiatry & Neuropsychology, Maastricht University, P.O. Box 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, t 043 3875572, e-mail s.valentijn@np.unimaas.nl

session 42