

Non-pharmacological Treatment of MCI and Dementia



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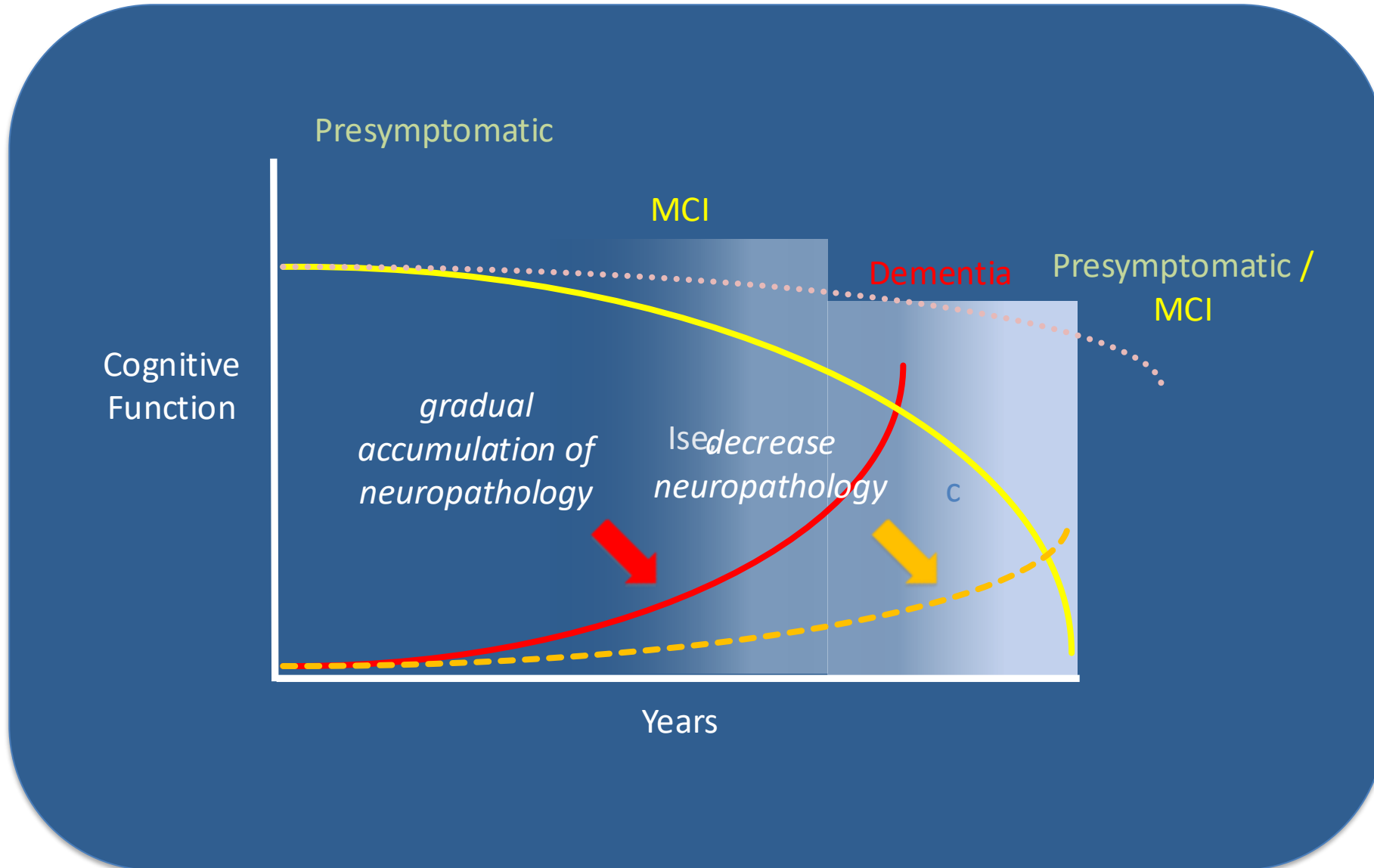
UW Project ECHO Dementia

January 23, 2026

Objectives

- 1) Increase awareness of risk factors for cognitive impairment and dementia and risk reduction through improved management.
- 2) Identify lifestyle interventions (i.e., exercise, diet, cognitive stimulation) that have impact on cognition and neurological disease processes, from prodromal phases to early dementia.
- 3) Identify local, state, regional and national programs and services to improve the quality of life for individuals and families living with dementia.

Treatment Targets

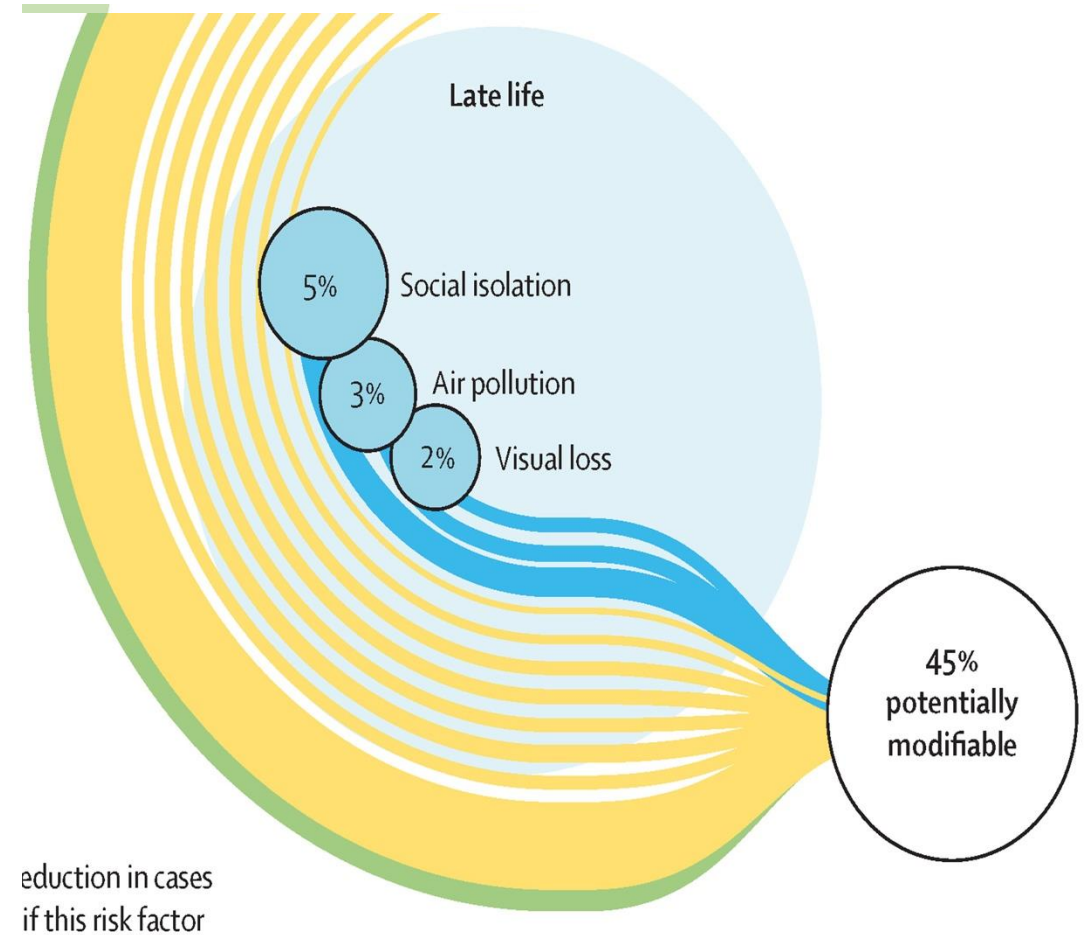
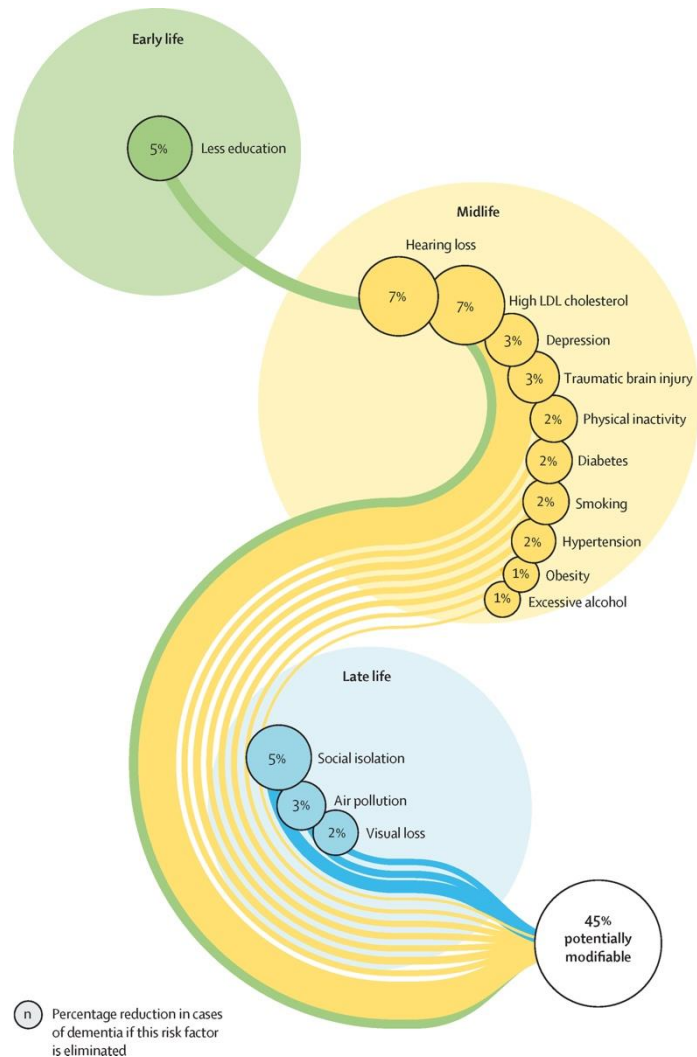


Prevention and Non-Pharmacological Interventions

- Treatment of Modifiable Risk Factors
- Cardiovascular Exercise
- Cognitive Activation and Rehabilitation
- Dietary Interventions
- Optimizing Sleep
- Stress / Distress Management
- Community Engagement / Socialization

Lancet Commission

Dementia Prevention, Intervention, and Care Livingston et al., 2024

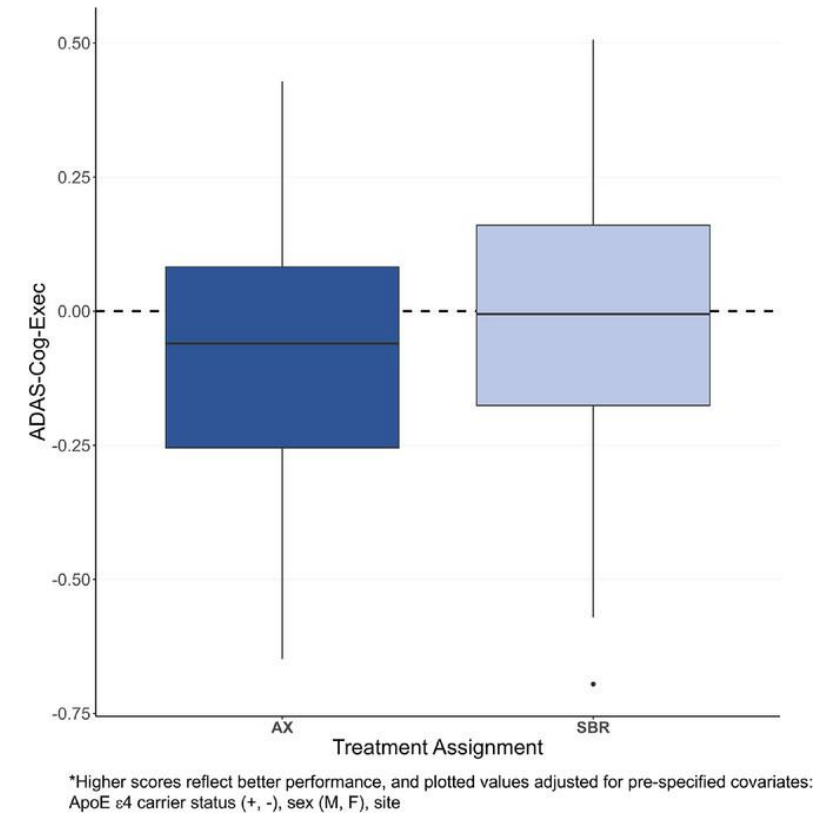


Exercise and Physical Activity and Dementia

- Over 150 meta-analyses in the last 5 years
- Highest quality/most consistent evidence
- Likely multiple mechanisms of action (Wilckens et al., 2021, Hippocampus)
- Likely beneficial in multiple domains
 - Cognition (processing speed, EF>memory) (Wang et al., 2020, Aging)
 - Physical function/mobility/falls (Lai et al., 2019, AM J Phys Med Rehabil)
 - Sleep (O'Caoimh et al., 2019)
 - Neuropsychiatric symptoms (Watt, et al, 2021, BMJ)
- Likely most beneficial in combination with other NPTs
- Pooled effects highest for delaying onset>MCI>dementia
 - Group > individual
 - Across settings, including home-based (de Almeida, 2020, Gerontologist)

Effects of exercise on cognition and Alzheimer's biomarkers in a randomized controlled trial of adults with mild cognitive impairment: The EXERT study

- 296 sedentary older adults with amnestic MCI
 - Aerobic training vs. stretching/balance/range of motion
- Good adherence
 - AX = 81%, SBR = 87%
- No 12-month cognitive decline for either group
- 12-month hippocampal volume loss = 0.51%
- Importance of support/structure
 - Cohort
 - Trainer



Exercise and Physical Activity

- Should be recommended to adults with normal cognition to reduce the risk of cognitive decline.
 - Quality of evidence: moderate
 - Strength of the recommendation: strong
- May be recommended to adults with MCI to reduce the risk of cognitive decline.
 - Quality of evidence: low
 - Strength of the recommendation: conditional
- 150 min of moderate-intensity or 75 min vigorous-intensity /week
 - Double for additional health benefits
- Aerobic activity = 10+ minutes' duration
- Poor mobility = balance and fall prevention on 3+ days/week
- Muscle-strengthening = major muscle groups on 2+ days/week
- Limitations = as physically active as abilities and conditions allow

RISK REDUCTION
OF COGNITIVE DECLINE
AND DEMENTIA

WHO GUIDELINES



World Health Organization, 2019

How to Implement

- Scheduling and structure
- Create accountability
 - Classes
 - Exercise partner(s)
 - PT/Trainer
 - Exercise Diaries
 - FitBit/exercise trackers
 - Check in calls
- Program for variability and engagement
- Graduated, well-paced incremental increases
- Motivational interviewing/enhancement
 - “You know why I want you to exercise, why do you want to?”
 - “From ‘not at all’ to ‘very,’ how likely are you to _____? What would get you to ‘very’?”

[illegible]

Cognitive training for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia: Insights from a systematic review and Bayesian meta-analysis

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<https://doi.org/10.1177/13872877251334795>

Sage Journals

Regular Section - Systematic Review

Cognitive training for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia: Insights from a systematic review and Bayesian meta-analysis

Francesco Giaquinto¹, Marika Iaia¹, Ezia Rizzi², Luigi Macchitella³, Daniele Luigi Romano², Giorgia Tosi^{2,*}, and Paola Angelelli^{1,*}

Background The prevalence of individuals living with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), Alzheimer's disease (AD), and other forms of dementia is globally increasing. Four out of nine international clinical guidelines recommend non-pharmacological cognitive interventions to enhance cognition, independence, and wellbeing. However, the effectiveness of cognitive rehabilitation (CR) and cognitive training (CT) for individuals with MCI and AD and other forms of dementia is still debatable, often due to significant heterogeneity among studies.

Objective This study aims to assess the effectiveness of CT and CR in these populations.

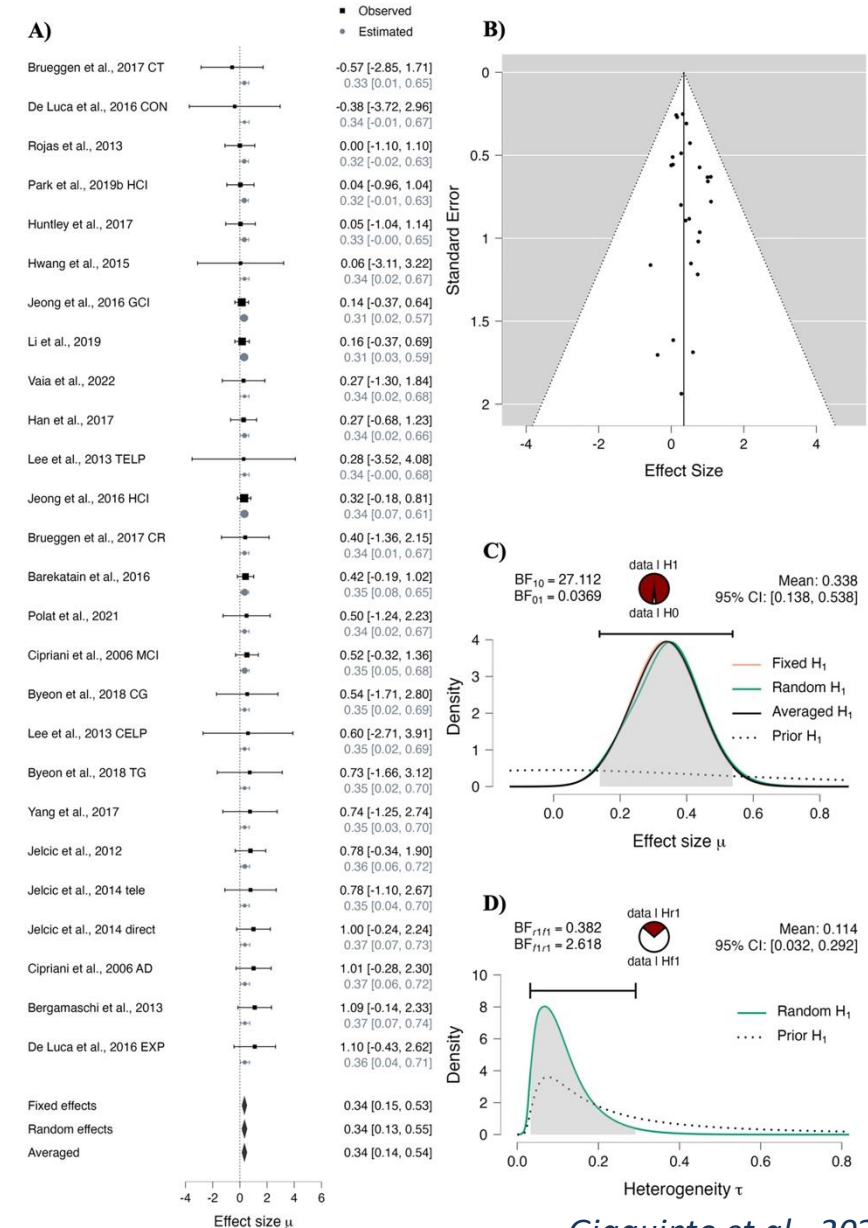
Methods Following PRISMA guidelines, we conducted a comprehensive literature search across databases including OVID, MEDLINE, EMBASE, and Scopus, identifying randomized controlled trials and non-randomized pre-post intervention studies. The Bayesian meta-analysis focused on pre-post changes in global cognition, quality of life, everyday functioning, and depression, avoiding comparisons with control groups to reduce heterogeneity (PROSPERO: CRD42022365038).

Results The search yielded 6075 results, with 40 studies meeting inclusion criteria, encompassing 50 independent trials. CT and people with AD and other dementias are the best represented intervention and population, respectively. CT was more effective in improving global cognition in individuals with AD and other dementias, and paper-and-pencil and face-to-face formats yielded greater benefits. The analysis showed a significant susceptibility to bias among the studies.

Conclusions Limitations in outcome measure (e.g., MMSE) suggest the need for more sensitive assessments, especially for MCI. Future research should explore broader aspects of wellbeing and investigate the potential of CR. Policymakers are encouraged to consider these findings when designing cognitive interventions for this population.

Keywords

Alzheimer's disease, Bayesian analysis, cognitive rehabilitation, cognitive training, dementia, everyday function, meta-analysis, mild cognitive impairment, neuropsychological tests, quality of life



How to Implement

- Engaging in a variety of activities that challenge memory, language, spatial reasoning, attention, etc.
 - Tasks emphasizing processing speed may most helpful (Rebok et al, 2014, JAGS)
- The difficulty should be adjustable to gently but consistently push your skills (without being too frustrating or discouraging)
- Activities done as a group or with a partner
- Activities that involve new learning (i.e., a new card game, language, instrument, lecture series)
- At least a hour a day of things that keep your mind active, like reading, socializing, games
- Some pre-packaged, computerized programs include:
 - Posit Science / Brain HQ - <https://www.brainhq.com/>
 - Lumosity - <https://www.lumosity.com/>
 - AARP Brain Games - <https://stayingsharp.aarp.org/about/brain-health/games/>

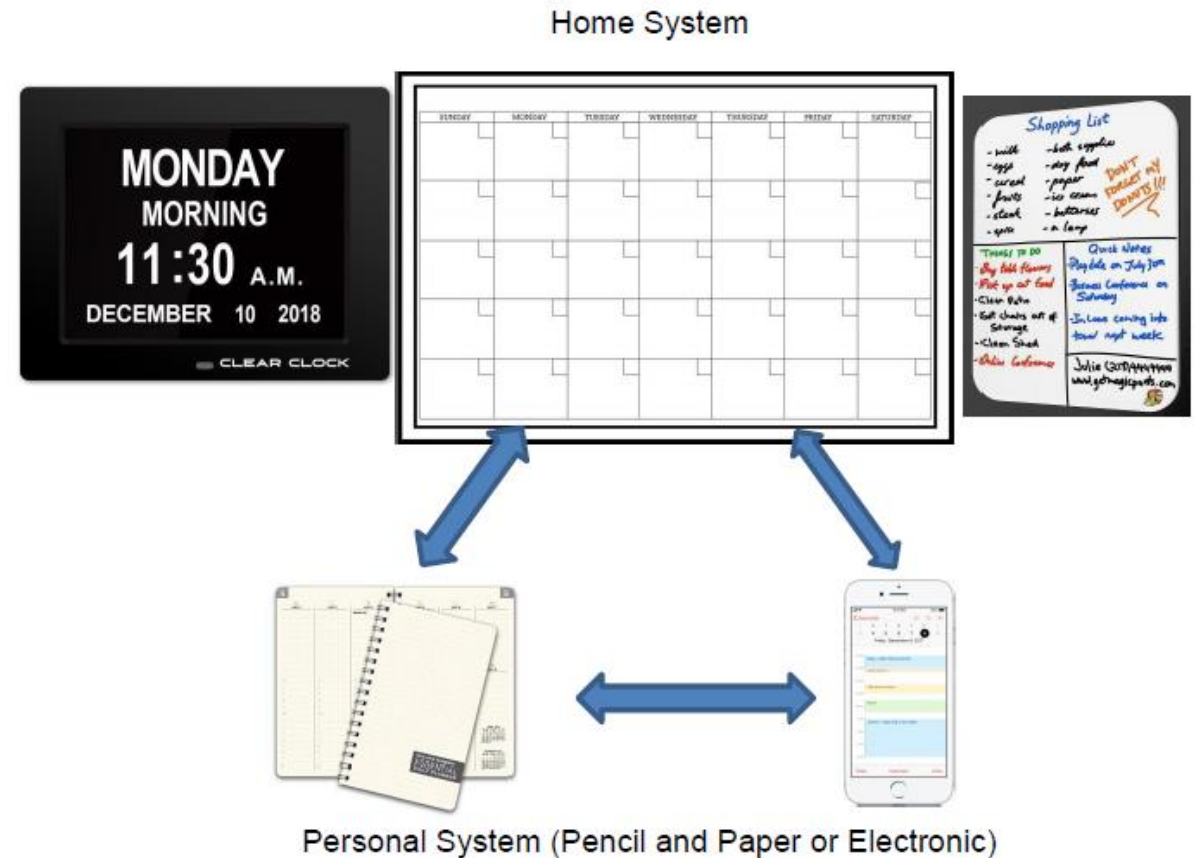
Cognitive Rehabilitation

- Restitution vs. Compensation
- Internal vs External Strategies
 - Encoding
 - Mnemonic
 - Chaining (forward/backward)
 - Chunking
 - Errorless learning
 - Storage
 - PQIRST
 - Spaced retrieval
 - Retrieval
 - Cues/prompts
 - Recognition strategies



Cognitive Rehabilitation: Scaffolding

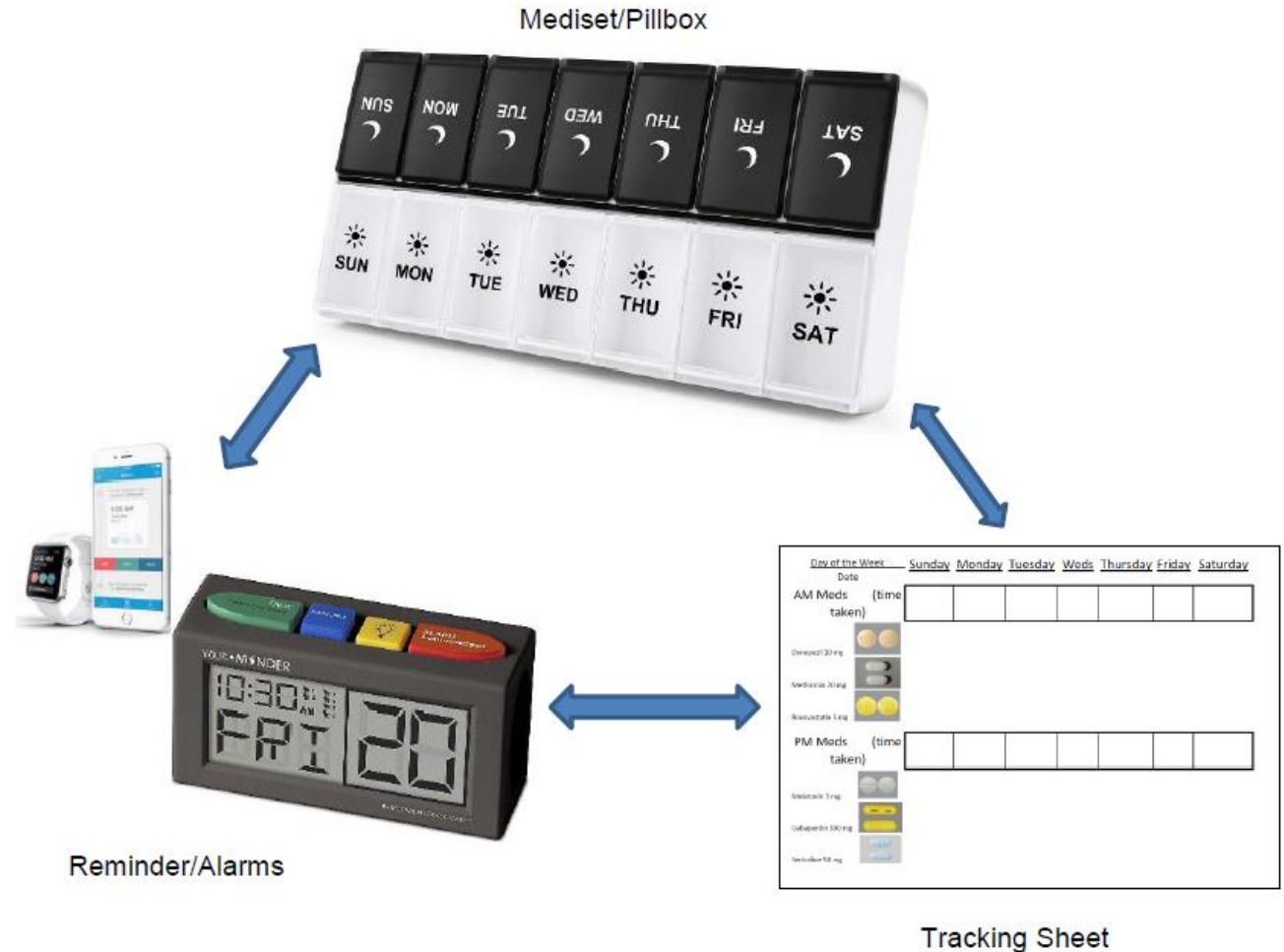
- External devices include:
 - Information display items
 - Clocks, calendars, digital photo frames
 - Electronic reminders
 - Phones, pagers, pillboxes
 - Location detection devices
 - Electronic tagging
 - Way-finding
 - GPS, architectural design
 - Electronic storage
 - PDA, mobile phone
 - Diaries, organizers, Filofaxes
 - Storage devices



Memory Rehabilitation - Combined

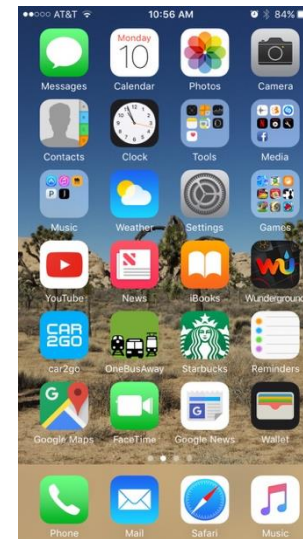
– Compensatory System

- Mediset
- Pill reminders/alarms
- Tracking Sheet
- Incorporate other tools/techniques
 - Calendar
 - Errorless learning
 - Location of practice



How to Implement

- Referral to SLP/cognitive rehabilitation/OT/therapist
- Critical importance of a care partner
 - Follow through
 - Carryover
 - Generalization/adaptation
- Capitalizing on previously used tools
- Shopping for the right version of the tool
- Recruit the family or friend tech support person
- Pick one area/intervention at a time
- Stress the importance of practice and need for time



Diet and Dementia Risk

Table 1. Medi/DASH/MIND dietary components and potential neuroprotective benefits.

Dietary Component	Vascular Protection	Anti-Inflammatory Protection	Antioxidant Protection	Neural Protection
Whole Grains [2,13,29,41–46]	X	X	X	X
Vegetables (MIND diet emphasizes leafy greens in addition to other vegetables) [2,29,39,41–47]	X	X	X	
Fruits (MIND diet emphasizes berries over other fruits) [2,29,39,41–47]	X	X	X	
Fatty Fish (e.g., salmon, tuna, sardines) [2,13,14,31,41,42]	X	X	X	X
Legumes/Beans [2,41,45,48]	X	X	X	X
Nuts [2,29,41,46,47]	X	X	X	X
Olive Oil (Medi, MIND diets) [33,49,50]		X	X	
Red Wine (Medi, MIND diets) [29,46,49,51–53]		X	X	

“X” indicates association with the neuroprotective benefit listed.

Diet and Dementia Risk

Table 2. Comparison of Mediterranean, DASH, and MIND dietary components. The components in bold are common across all three dietary patterns.

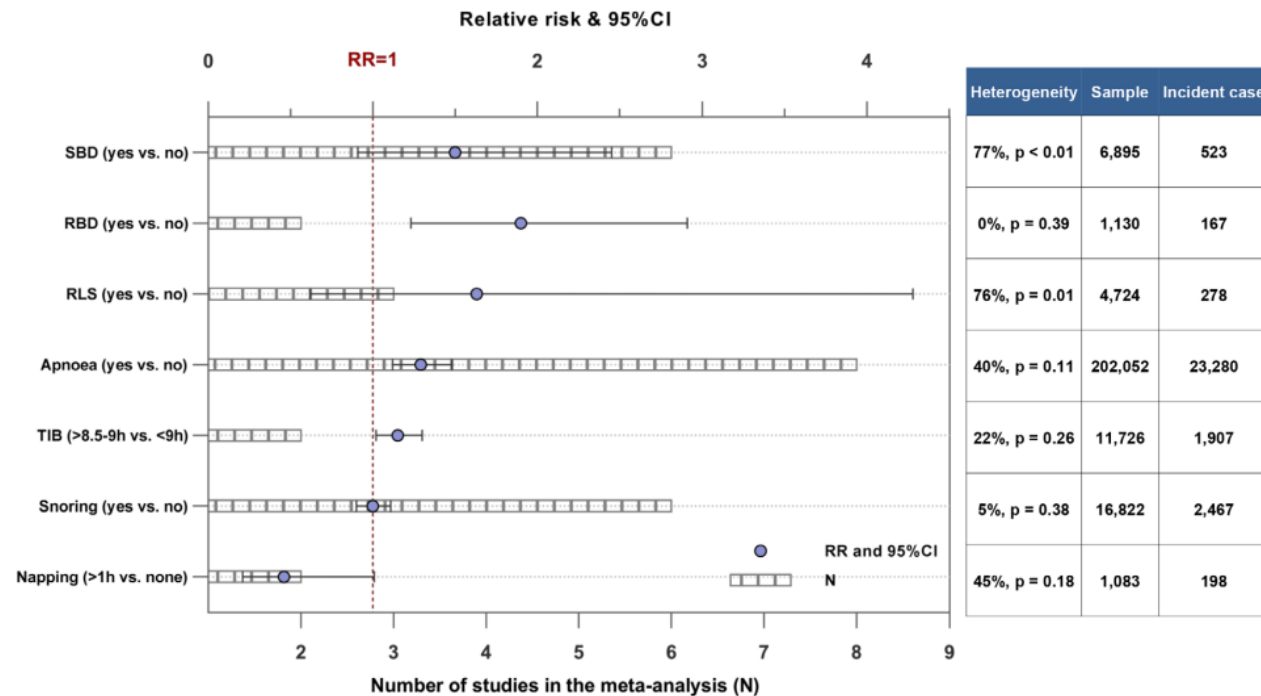
	Mediterranean [17,54,55]	DASH [56,57]	MIND [17]
HIGH AMOUNTS	Olive Oil (exclusive)	-	-
	Fish	-	-
	Grains (non-refined)	Grains	Grains (whole)
	Fruits	Fruits	Berries
	Vegetables	Vegetables	Green leafy vegetables
	-	-	Other vegetables
	Potatoes	-	-
	Legumes	Legumes	-
	Beans	-	Beans
	Nuts	Nuts	Nuts
MODERATE AMOUNTS	Seeds	Seeds	-
	-	Low-fat dairy	-
	Poultry	Poultry	Poultry
	-	Fish	Fish
	Alcohol	-	Alcohol
SMALL AMOUNTS	-	-	Olive oil (primary)
	Full-fat dairy	-	-
	Red meat	Red meat	Red meat
	Processed meat	-	-
	Sweets	Sweets	Sweets/pastries
RESTRICTED	-	Saturated fat as a % of total fat	-
	-	Sodium <2400 mg/d	-
	-	-	Cheese
	-	-	Butter/margarine
	-	-	Fast/fried foods

How to Implement

- Assess needs/preferences/willingness of others
 - Especially the grocery shopper
- Referral to dietician/nutritionist
- Consider incremental changes
- Harm reduction model
- Pre-packaged meals
- Consider different textures, spices, plate to food contrast
- Importance of routines, consistent table settings
- Consider involving company or family
- Offering limited choices
 - “Do you want broccoli or spinach?”

Sleep and Dementia Risk

- Association between sleep-related problems and cognitive disorders
 - REM behavioral disorder
 - Sleep apnea
 - Longer time in bed
 - Habitual napping

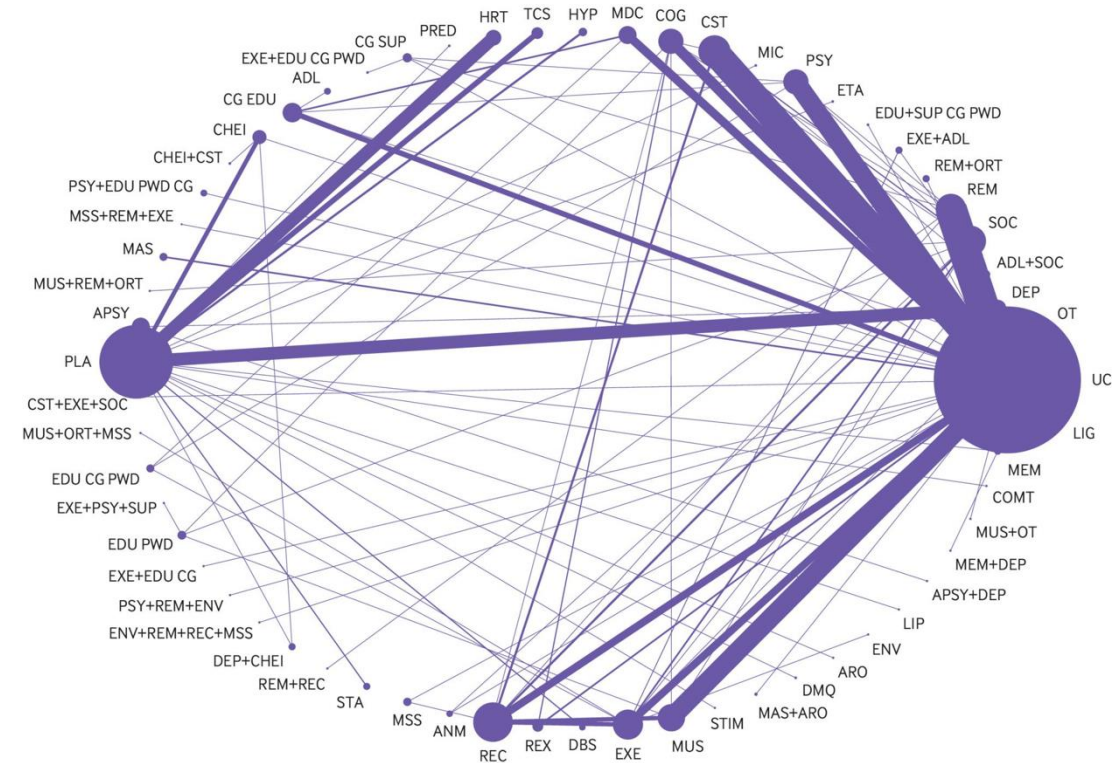


How to Implement

- Sleep hygiene/habits
 - Establish consistent sleep and wake times
 - Importance of a wind-down routine
 - Avoiding screens (30-45 min before bed)
 - Avoid caffeine and alcohol (4-6 hours before bed)
 - Exercise (earlier in the day)
 - Quiet, cool, dark room
 - Bedroom is for sleeping and sex only
 - Avoid or program naps
 - Avoid pets in the bed
 - Sleep restriction
- Referral for CBT-I
 - Associations with anxiety, depression, QOL
 - Effective in MCI, early stage dementia (Blackman et al., 2021; Jin et al., 2021)

Non-pharm Treatment of Depression in Dementia

- 61 interventions across 213 studies (N = 25,177)
- Mild to moderate dementia with and without MDD
- 10 interventions with high probability of a meaningful change
 - Exercise combined with social interaction and cognitive stimulation
 - Psychotherapy combined with reminiscence therapy and environmental modification
 - Cognitive stimulation and a cholinesterase inhibitor
 - Cognitive stimulation
 - Animal therapy
 - Reminiscence therapy
 - Exercise
 - Massage and touch therapy
 - Multidisciplinary care
 - Occupational therapy



Mindfulness Meditation and MCI

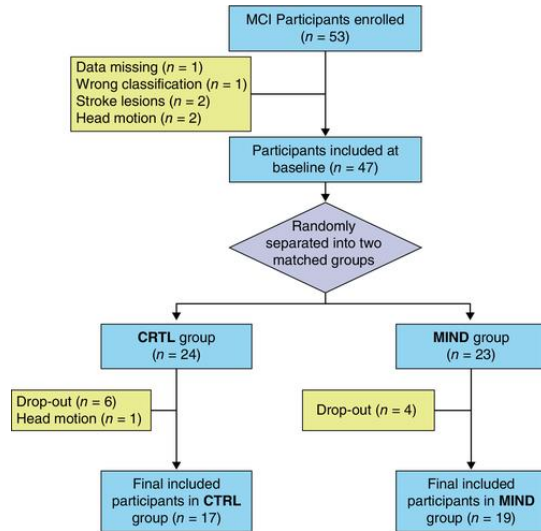
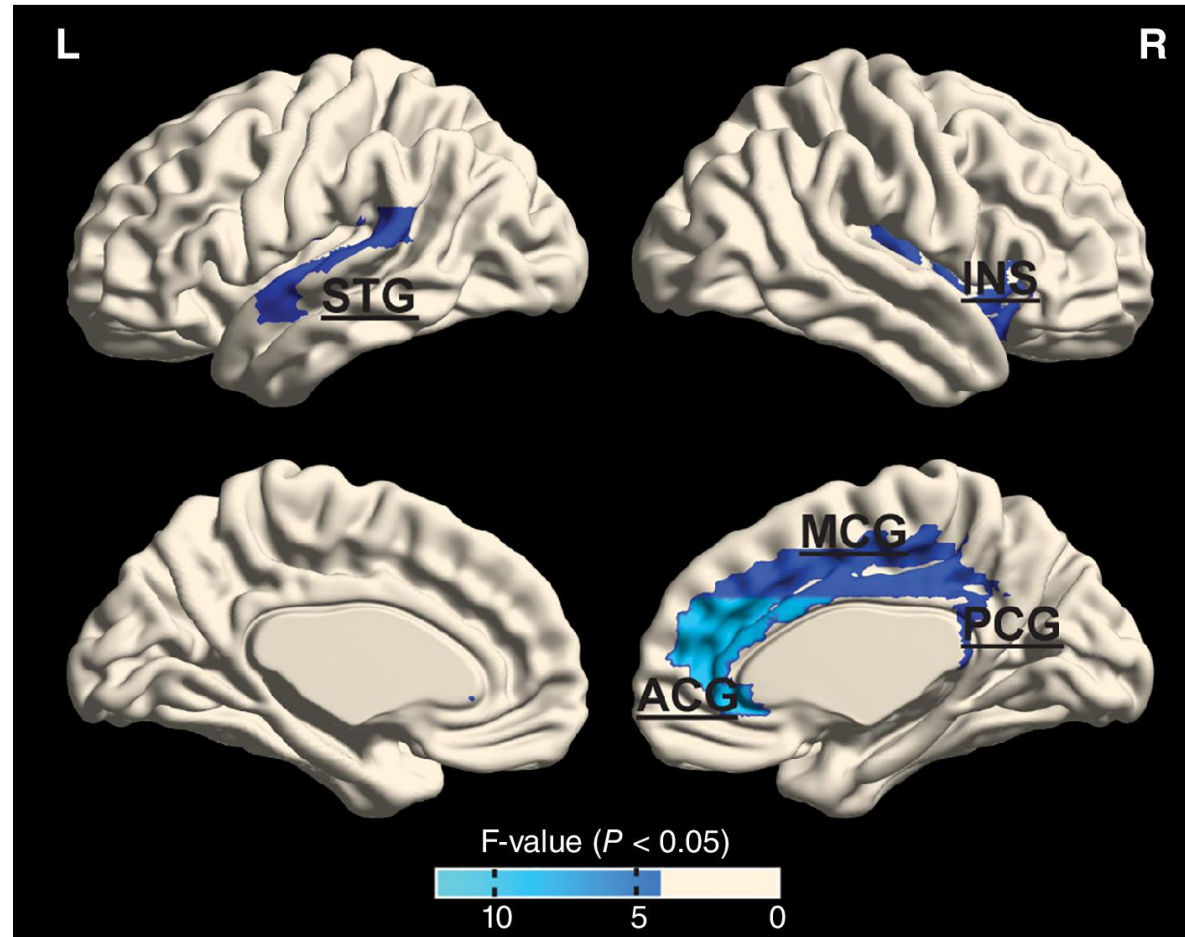


Table 2. Effects of mindfulness practice on the neurocognitive measures and temporal network metrics

Metrics	Two-way repeated ANOVA		
	Group effect $F_{1, 34}$ (P -value)	Time effect $F_{1, 34}$ (P -value)	Interaction $F_{1, 34}$ (P -value)
Neurocognitive measures			
MMSE	0.925 (0.343)	0.006 (0.940)	0.090 (0.766)
RAVLT	5.938 (0.020)¹	17.092 (<0.001)¹	1.239 (0.273)
Delayed recall			
RAVLT	0.371 (0.546)	2.387 (0.132)	4.545 (0.040)
Recognition			
Block design	2.502 (0.123)	4.278 (0.046)¹	0.807 (0.375)
Temporal network metrics			
E_{gb}^t	3.401 (0.074)	0.001 (0.970)	6.429 (0.016)
E_{loc}^t	0.005 (0.953)	6.405 (0.016)¹	0.088 (0.768)

Note: Significant effects ($P < 0.05$) were highlighted by the bold text.
¹ indicates MIND < CTRL; ▲ indicates Pre- < Post-intervention.



Effects of Mindfulness Training on Depression and Cognition in Older People With Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Journal of the American Geriatrics Society

Journal of the
American Geriatrics Society

REVIEW ARTICLE

Effects of Mindfulness Training on Depression and Cognition in Older People With Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

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Keywords: aged | cognition | mental health | older people | rehabilitation

ABSTRACT

Background: This systematic review and meta-analysis aimed to evaluate the efficacy of mindfulness-based treatments for older people with mild cognitive impairment (MCI) who also experience depression and cognitive difficulties.

Methods: Seven databases were searched: PubMed, EBSCOhost, CINAHL Complete, Cochrane Library, ProQuest, Scopus, and Web of Science, up to July 2025. PRISMA guidelines, the Oxford Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine scale, the RoB 2 tool, and GRADEpro were employed to evaluate the methodological quality and evidence reliability. The review plan was pre-registered in the PROSPERO database (CRD420251080874).

Results: Initially, 1738 records were identified in the databases. Thirteen studies that met the inclusion criteria were included in the analysis. The PICOS framework was employed for the subsequent analysis. The meta-analysis indicated that participants receiving mindfulness therapies experienced a significant reduction in depression symptoms, as assessed by the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS, $p=0.045$). In contrast, the Montreal Cognitive Assessment ($p=0.061$) and the Mini-Mental State Examination ($p=0.713$) did not demonstrate statistically significant changes in cognitive ability.

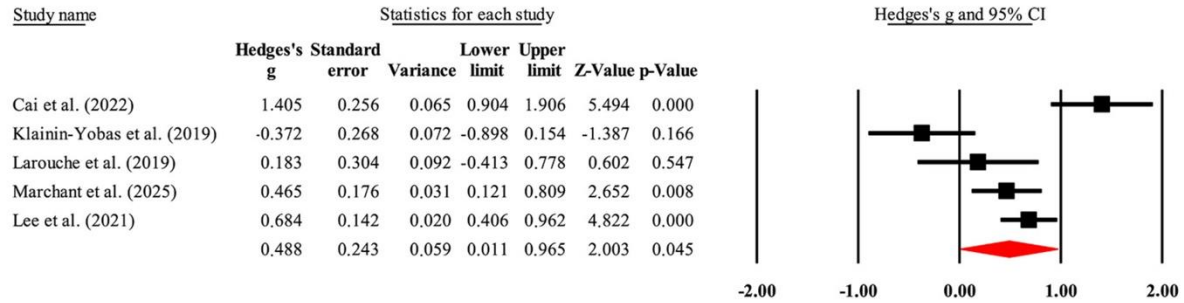
Conclusions: The findings suggest that mindfulness-based training may reduce depressive symptoms in older individuals with MCI; however, the impact on cognitive abilities remains inconclusive.

1 | Introduction

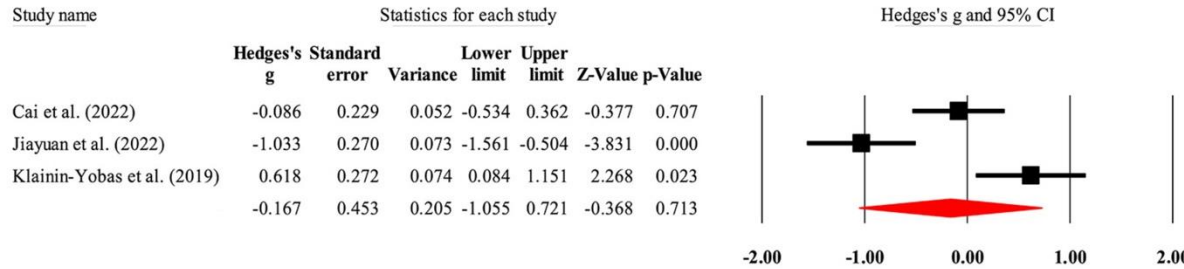
The global population of older people has been growing rapidly, reaching 962 million individuals during 2017 (13% of the world population). Projections indicate a continued increase,

with numbers expected to reach 1.4 billion by 2030, 2.1 billion by 2050, and 3.1 billion by the year 2100 [1]. Aging is strongly associated with a range of health conditions, particularly neurodegenerative disorders and mild cognitive impairment (MCI), which implies significant challenges to both lifespan

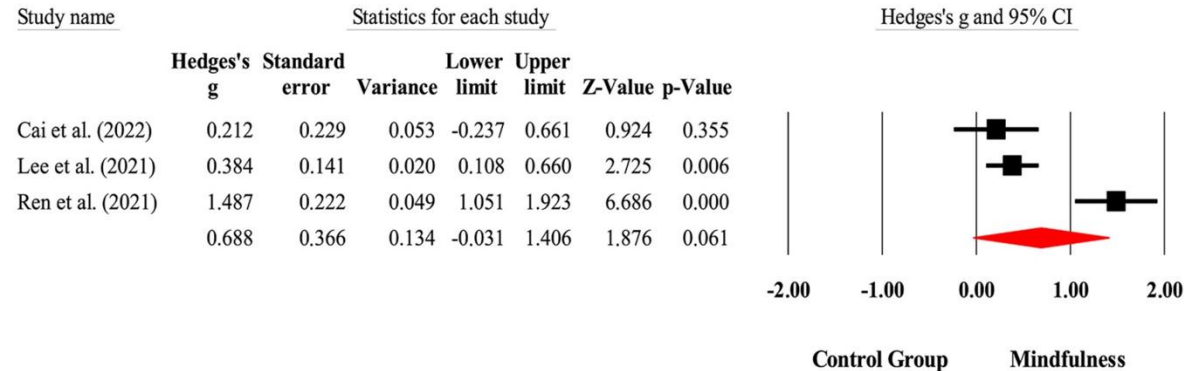
A



B



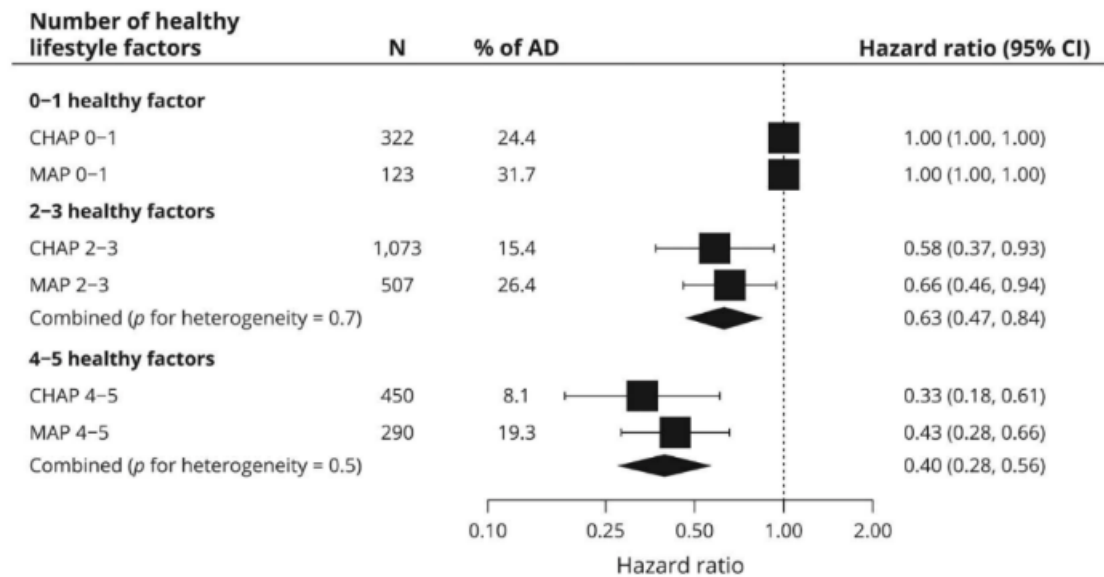
C



The Importance of Lifestyle

- Combining multiple healthy lifestyle factors may be more impactful for reducing dementia risk
 - Healthy diet
 - Moderate to vigorous physical activity
 - Light to moderate alcohol intake
 - Stopping smoking
 - Cognitive stimulation
- 4 or 5 = 59% lower risk
- 2 or 3 = 39% lower risk
- May offset genetic risk

Figure HRs of AD according to the combination of healthy lifestyle factors in the prospective cohort studies



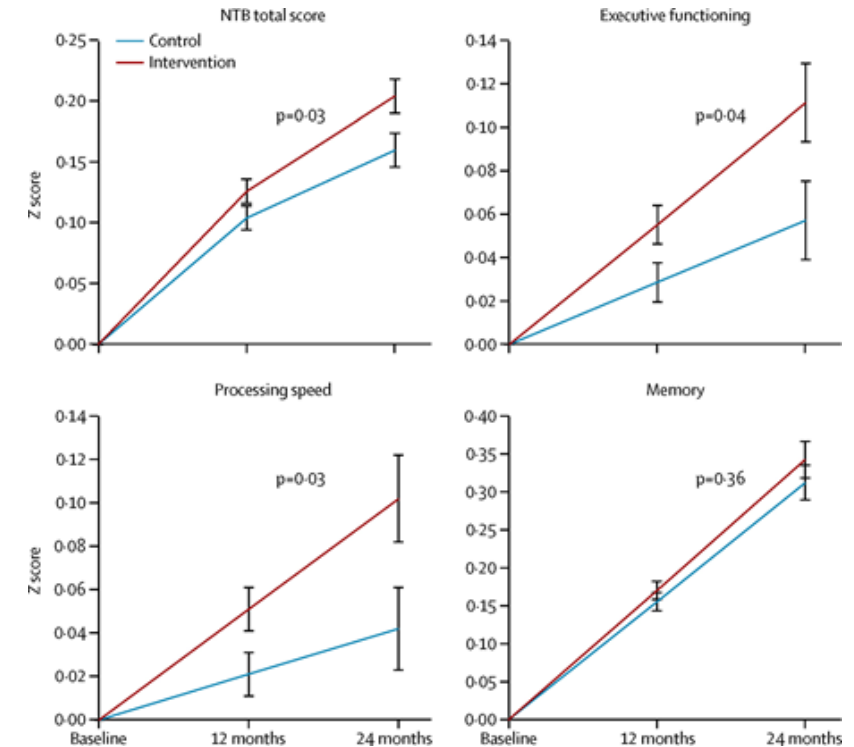
Model adjusted for age, sex, race, education, *APOE* ϵ 4, and prevalence of cardiovascular disease (including heart disease or stroke). A random-effects meta-analysis was used to combine cohort-specific results. AD = Alzheimer dementia; CHAP = Chicago Health and Aging Project; CI = confidence interval; HR = hazard ratio; MAP = Rush Memory and Aging Project; N = number of participants in each group.

FINGER study

- 1260 people for 2 years
 - Nutritional guidance, exercise
 - Cognitive training/social activities
 - Improvement of metabolic/vascular RF
 - Control group: 13 pep talks

- Adherence: 12% dropout rate

- Results: All 3 cog domains improved over placebo: memory, executive function, processing speed ($p < 0.05$).
 - Those >70 , or with MMSE <26 improved more



US POINTER Study

JAMA

QUESTION Can multidomain lifestyle interventions improve or protect cognitive function in older adults at risk of cognitive decline and dementia?

CONCLUSION Among older adults at risk of cognitive decline and dementia, a structured, higher-intensity intervention had a greater benefit on global cognition than a self-guided, low-intensity intervention.

POPULATION

1455 Women
656 Men



Adults aged 60 to 79 years with sedentary lifestyle, suboptimal diet, and at least 2 other cognitive decline and dementia risk factors

Mean age: 68 years

LOCATIONS

5
Clinical sites
in the US



INTERVENTION



2111 Participants randomized

1056
Structured

Promotion of increased physical and cognitive activity, healthy diet, social engagement, and cardiovascular monitoring via 38 team meetings with navigators and interventionists; activity plans with quantifiable adherence metrics



1055
Self-guided

Six peer team meetings; publicly available education materials and encouragement of lifestyle changes

FINDINGS

Mean rate of change per year
in global cognitive function

Structured
0.243 SD
(95% CI, 0.227 to 0.258)

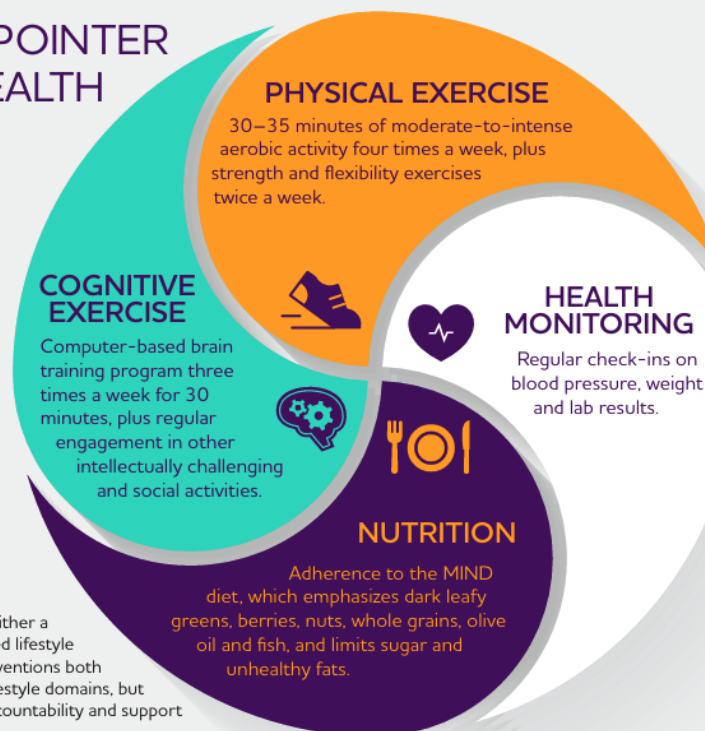
Self-guided
0.213 SD
(95% CI, 0.198 to 0.229)

The structured intervention significantly improved global cognitive function:
Between-group difference
in mean rate of change per year,
0.029 SD
(95% CI, 0.008 to 0.050); $P = .008$

© AMA

Baker LD, Espeland MA, Whitmer RA, et al. Structured vs self-guided multidomain lifestyle interventions for global cognitive function: the US POINTER randomized clinical trial. JAMA. Published online July 28, 2025. doi:10.1001/jama.2025.12923

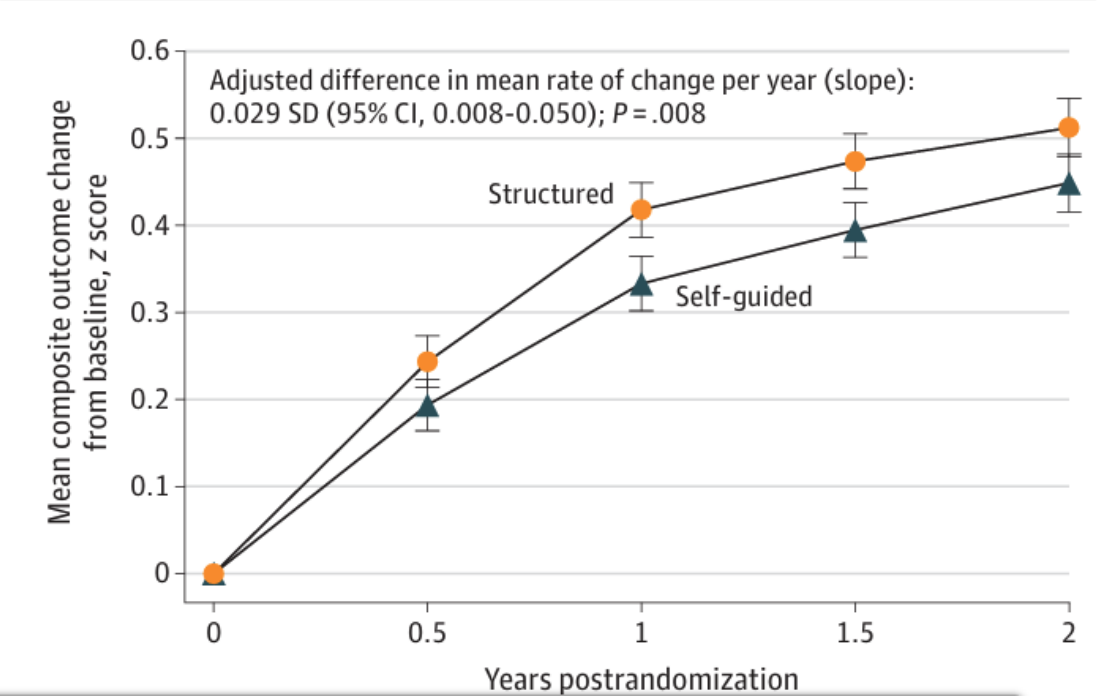
THE U.S. POINTER BRAIN HEALTH RECIPE*



*Participants followed either a self-guided or structured lifestyle program. The two interventions both focused on the same lifestyle domains, but differed in structure, accountability and support provided.

US Pointer – Results

Figure 3. Change From Baseline in Global Cognitive Function Composite Score (Primary Outcome) by Structured vs Self-Guided Lifestyle Interventions



Subgroup	Structured		Self-guided		Adjusted difference (95% CI)	Favors self-guided	Favors structured	P value	P value for interaction
	No. of participants	Mean change per y in SD (95% CI)	No. of participants	Mean change per y in SD (95% CI)					
Baseline cognition									
Less than median	540	0.255 (0.233-0.276)	516	0.202 (0.180-0.224)	0.054 (0.024 to 0.084)			<.001	.02
Median or higher	516	0.231 (0.209-0.253)	539	0.224 (0.203-0.245)	0.004 (-0.025 to 0.034)			.78	
Sex									
Female	721	0.238 (0.219-0.256)	734	0.214 (0.196-0.232)	0.023 (-0.002 to 0.049)			.08	.44
Male	335	0.253 (0.226-0.280)	321	0.212 (0.185-0.239)	0.041 (0.003 to 0.078)			.03	
Age, y									
<70	600	0.275 (0.254-0.295)	608	0.237 (0.217-0.257)	0.036 (0.009 to 0.064)			.01	.41
≥70	456	0.202 (0.179-0.225)	447	0.182 (0.158-0.205)	0.018 (-0.014 to 0.051)			.26	
APOE ε4 carrier									
No	731	0.257 (0.238-0.275)	713	0.229 (0.210-0.247)	0.028 (0.003 to 0.053)			.03	.95
Yes	322	0.212 (0.185-0.240)	338	0.182 (0.155-0.209)	0.029 (-0.008 to 0.067)			.13	
Framingham risk									
Low	289	0.269 (0.240-0.298)	331	0.235 (0.209-0.262)	0.030 (-0.009 to 0.069)			.13	.54
Medium	344	0.243 (0.216-0.270)	334	0.214 (0.187-0.241)	0.029 (-0.008 to 0.066)			.13	
High	261	0.219 (0.189-0.250)	268	0.208 (0.179-0.238)	0.011 (-0.031 to 0.054)			.59	
Prevalent cardiovascular disease	162	0.233 (0.195-0.272)	119	0.161 (0.116-0.206)	0.066 (0.007 to 0.124)			.03	
Overall	1056	0.243 (0.227-0.258)	1055	0.213 (0.198-0.229)	0.029 (0.008 to 0.050)				

Healthy Action to Benefit Independence and Thinking HABIT (Mayo Clinic)

- 10 day brain camp for individuals with MCI, and study partner
 - amnesic MCI (additional cognitive domains okay)
 - 272 dyads
 - Age: M=75, SD = 8
 - Male 58.8%
- 5 components (suppression design)
 - physical activity (yoga)
 - brain fitness
 - memory compensation training
 - support group
 - wellness education
- 6 month booster session
- Aim: delay or prevent progression to dementia

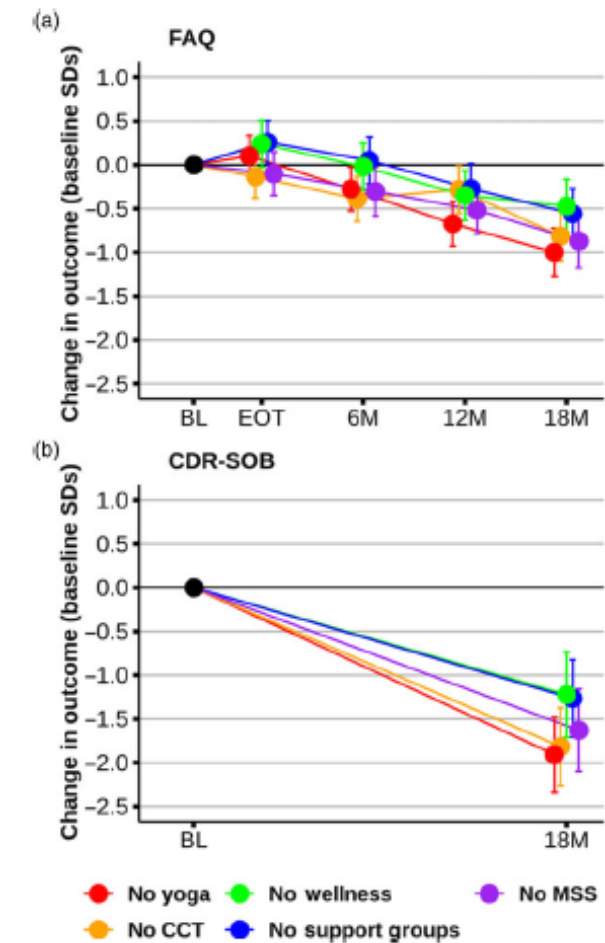


Figure 1. Effect sizes by study arm.

ADAPT Program

- Applied Daily Activities to Promote Thinking
- Six sessions, taper design
- Multimodal treatment
 - Exercise
 - Meditation
 - Support groups
 - Cognitive rehabilitation
 - Education

Time	Activity
8:45 – 9 AM	Arrival, Check-In
9 – 9:15 AM	Welcome Mindfulness Meditation
9:15 – 10:15 AM	Staying in Motion
10:15 – 11:15 AM	Calendar Training
11:15 - 12:15 AM	Support Groups
12:15 – 12:30 PM	Mindfulness Meditation Closing

Programs and Services

- Support groups/educational events
- Dementia Friendly Communities
- Momentia
 - Zoo/Garden walks
 - Alzheimer's cafes
 - Arts events
- Dementia Friends
- Intergenerational programs



Socialization and Community Engagement



UW Memory and Brain Wellness Center Memory Hub

- Outreach center in partnership with Frye Art Museum
 - Dementia-Friendly Community, Collaboration, and Statewide Impact



Resources

- WHO Dementia Risk Reduction Guidelines
 - <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550543>
- Alzheimer's Association
 - Taking Action workbook:
http://www.alz.org/mnnd/documents/15_ALZ_Taking_Action_Workbook.pdf
 - Living Well workbook:
http://www.alz.org/mnnd/documents/15_ALZ_Living_Well_Workbook_Web.pdf
- Mindfulness Northwest
 - <http://www.mindfulnessnorthwest.com/>
- Momentia Seattle
 - www.momentiasseattle.org
- UW Memory Hub
 - <https://https://thememoryhub.org/>

Contact Information

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Thank you for your attention!



Questions?

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