MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT PATIENT INTERVENTION TRIAL: CHALLENGES AND APPROACHES
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BACKGROUND
• Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is an intermediate condition between healthy aging and dementia.
• Approximately 10-15% of people with MCI transition to Alzheimer’s disease, compared to 1-2% of healthy older adults.¹,²
• There is limited literature on computer game use amongst people with MCI.
• Recent studies with healthy older adults set frequency of game play to 1 hour/day, compared to 1 hour/day for MCI patients.

OBJECTIVE
• Conduct a pilot project to prepare for a longitudinal cognitive intervention trial. Specifically, we wanted to see if we could recruit sufficient MCI patients, test an intervention schedule and identify any other project constraints.

METHODS
• We aimed to enroll 30 amnestic MCI participants from the Memory Clinic at the Elisabeth Bruyère Hospital in Ottawa.
• The Memory Clinic sees approximately 333 patients per month with about 15% MCI.
• Participants were identified through physician diagnosis, chart review, cognitive testing, and interdisciplinary team diagnosis consensus.
• Games played: BrainHQ by Posit Science (Fig. 1) or Sudoku / word search games (Fig. 2) designed by one of our collaborators (BW).
• Intervention plan: 1 hour game play, 3 times per week, for 9 weeks in 4 different locations in the city of Ottawa, ON, Canada.
• Pre- and post- intervention cognitive testing: Trails A and B, Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MOCA), and Repeatable Battery for the Assessment of Neuropsychological Status (RBANS).
• Observations during game play.

RESULTS
• Patients enjoyed the games and tolerated the intervention schedule.
• Solid retention record: only one participant dropped out during the intervention.
• Many challenges during recruitment and intervention:
  • Chart reviews were time consuming.
  • Only a fraction of MCI patients were purely amnestic, prompting a revision to the participant definition to include amnestic MCI plus one other affected cognitive domain (Fig. 3).
  • After 6 months, only 17 individuals were recruited.
  • Many participants missed sessions for a variety of reasons including personal appointments as well as winter and summer vacations.

DISCUSSION
• Recruitment of MCI participants for a cognitive intervention trial is feasible but difficult.
• While the intervention schedule appeared to be well-tolerated, the design for a broader study needs to consider time of year, scheduling difficulties, and study location.
• We believe that the research assistant’s enthusiasm was a key factor in participant retention.

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REFERENCES
4) Flow chart: Amnestic and non-amnestic MCI subjects. - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/6748860_Fig1_Figure-1-Flow-chart-Amnestic-and-non-amnestic-MCI-subjects[accessed Jun 14, 2016]