



# JOYGAGE

Helping you take the right steps to improve your mind and memory

## Reference Materials

**Title:** **Cognitive stimulation to improve cognitive functioning in people with dementia**

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### **Abstract:**

#### Background

Cognitive stimulation is an intervention for people with dementia which offers a range of enjoyable activities providing general stimulation for thinking, concentration and memory usually in a social setting, such as a small group. Its roots can be traced back to Reality Orientation (RO), which was developed in the late 1950s as a response to confusion and disorientation in older patients in hospital units in the USA. RO emphasised the engagement of nursing assistants in a hopeful, therapeutic process but became associated with a rigid, confrontational approach to people with dementia, leading to its use becoming less and less common.

Cognitive stimulation is often discussed in normal ageing as well as in dementia. This reflects a general view that lack of cognitive activity hastens cognitive decline. With people with dementia, cognitive stimulation attempts to make use of the positive aspects of RO whilst ensuring that the stimulation is implemented in a sensitive, respectful and person-centred manner.

There is often little consistency in the application and availability of psychological therapies in dementia services, so a systematic review of the available evidence regarding cognitive stimulation is important in order to identify its effectiveness and to place practice recommendations on a sound evidence base.

#### Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness and impact of cognitive stimulation interventions aimed at improving cognition for people with dementia, including any negative effects.

### **Conclusion:**

**There was consistent evidence from multiple trials that cognitive stimulation programmes benefit cognition in people with mild to moderate dementia over and above any medication effects.**

However, the trials were of variable quality with small sample sizes and only limited details of the randomisation method were apparent in a number of the trials. Other outcomes need more exploration but improvements in self-reported quality of life and well-being were promising.

**Further research should look into the potential benefits of longer term cognitive stimulation programmes and their clinical significance.**