Jog your Mind
A community program for intellectual vitality

Petre Popov
Researcher assistant
Jog your Mind Program, CREGÉS
petre.popov.cvd@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Kareen Nour
Researcher, CREGÉS; Clinical Adjunct professor
Department of Social and Preventive Medicine,
University of Montreal
kareen.nour.cvd@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Manon Parisien
Planning officer, PPHA team, CREGÉS
manon.parisien.cvd@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Norma Gilbert
Coordinator, Cutting-edge services for the PPHA team,
CREGÉS
norma.gilbert.cvd@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Danielle Guay
Researcher assistant
Jog your Mind Program, CREGÉS
danielle.guay.cvd@ssss.gouv.qc.ca

Nathalie Bier
Professor, School of Rehabilitation
University of Sherbrooke
Nathalie.Bier@USherbrooke.ca

Dave Ellemberg
Professor, Eco-Department of Kinesiology
University of Montreal
dave.ellemberg@umontreal.ca

Sophie Laforest
Professor, department of Kinesiology
University of Montreal; Associate researcher, CREGÉS
sophie.laforest@umontreal.ca

Changes in memory functioning is a significant source of worry for seniors, even for those experiencing normal cognitive aging. For seniors, intellectual functions are a crucial element for the maintenance of their autonomy and quality of life. However, intellectual aging has for a long time been looked at with a fatalistic belief that the accompanying deficits are inevitable. However, research on brain aging in recent decades has demonstrated that even at an advanced age, a brain that is regularly stimulated can maintain its ability to restructure itself in a positive way. Memory training programs, concentration, and other intellectual faculties may improve both the cognitive performance of healthy seniors and their subjective perception of that performance. It has also been demonstrated that a change in lifestyle, most notably in physical activity, can have a positive effect on seniors’ cognitive performance, and these effects can still be measured after several months, even years after the end of a program.

Activities that promote intellectual vitality are now considered a promising strategy for healthy, active aging. Programs that are presently available usually target the maintenance and stimulation of memory from a clinical perspective and are offered by professionals. Until now, there have been very few programs that combine cognitive training with the promotion of a healthy lifestyle while simultaneously focussing on the many determinants of cognitive vitality.

It is within this optic that the CSSS-CAU Cavendish prevention/promotion in health and aging (PPHA) team developed the Jog your Mind program, ensuring that it is both cost-effective and can be easily implemented in senior’s organisations. Although mainly targeting the community milieu, it could nevertheless also be implemented in residences for seniors, day centres, and municipal recreational services. The ten-session program is designed to be offered to groups of 5-15 seniors, requires very little material, and can be led by practitioners and volunteers who have participated in a training session.

Program development
Jog your Mind is intended for seniors who are worried about cognitive changes related to normal aging. It is not meant for seniors with Alzheimer’s disease or any other type of dementia, since experts have stated that learning-based memorisation programs can make these people feel frustrated.

Several steps were required to build the program:
1) a literature and research search for existing best practices;
2) validation by experts on its scientific content, implementation feasibility, and the pragmatic aspects of animation; and
3) testing with groups of seniors in order to adjust the program’s format and content. Consisting of ten sessions of two hours each, the program combines stimulation and health promotion following a multifactor approach. Many topics are covered: name recall strategies, the brain oxygenating benefits of exercise, healthy eating to help one think better, the impact of stress on the memory, and many others.

The program was inspired by the experiential approach of Kolb, which emphasizes the active participation of seniors, the sharing of personal experiences, and the practical application of strategies in daily life.
nal experiences, and the practical application of strategies in daily life. Each topic is covered in four steps: 1) Experimentation: the participants do an activity or take part in a reflection on the topic; 2) Sharing and analysis: in a group, the participants share the results of their activity and analyze the experience; 3) Conceptualisation: the group leader helps the participants draw general conclusions and explains the concepts; and 4) Application: the participants are invited to propose concrete applications of the concepts for their daily lives.

A project for and with the community
The program was tested in the spring of 2007 with 83 seniors, divided into four French and 2 English groups. The participants ranged in age from 60 to 90 years of age, were mostly women (85%), and came from a diverse socio-economic background. The education level varied from average to high. The participants were enthusiastic about the program; several organisations had waiting lists (the rate of participation exceeded 80%). It seems they found the program interesting, relevant and well-adapted, and it responded to their needs. The primary benefit they mentioned was the reinforcement of confidence in their cognitive abilities. We noted that half of the people enrolled were worried about their memory, thus the program did respond to a population need.

Following the promising testing results, the workshop manual was fine tuned and is available through the CSSS-CAU Cavendish. As well, an optional training session for group leaders was created to provide counsel and support for program implementation.

Program evaluation
A team of CSSS Cavendish, Université de Montréal, and Université de Sherbrooke researchers has received financing from the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) to evaluate the effects of Jog your Mind. A study is being conducted from 2009 – 2013 with 288 seniors who will be followed for one year to: 1) verify the short-term effects of the program in a community setting on their attitude, their knowledge related to cognitive vitality, their practice of healthy lifestyle, (mnemonic strategies, physical activity, as well as intellectual functions (memory, attention); 2) verify the effects of the program eight months later; and 3) conduct a follow-up on the process to document diverse variables related to the implementation, the population, and the response of the organisations.

For more information:
Danielle Guay
514-484-7878, extension 1338