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Can a memory club help maintain cognitive function? A longitudinal analysis

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Abstract

Epidemiologic studies have shows that greater participation in mental, physical, and social activities can reduce the risk for development of dementia and other cognitive deficits in aging. These findings lead to the development of so-called “early memory loss” (EML) programs intervention which provide a forum to “exercise” mind and body, and offer opportunities to socialize with others. In a longitudinal study of 55 persons with mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia, we examined whether participation in the club would be associated with changes in cognitive function over one year. Controlling for relevant covariates, we found that club participation was associated with improvements in two of three executive function measures and maintenance of function on two of three memory measures. We observed decline, over time, on a measure of delayed recall. This pilot study suggests that EML clubs may be an efficacious, non-pharmacologic intervention for people with early memory loss. However, further research (especially RCTs) is needed before recommending wide-spread implementation of this program.