Cognitive Training in Local Setting: Two Methodological Versions

Nina Madsen Sjøen, Susanne Weidner, Stine Spellerberg and Margareta Klingert
Center for Rehabilitation of Brain Injury, Copenhagen, Denmark; *Child and Youth Rehabilitation Centre in Skåne, Sweden

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to test different ways of implementing the cognitive training programme SHARP in the local setting. As AMAT (Amsterdam Memory and Attention Training for children) has already been proved to have a significant effect through trials in the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark, the purpose of this pilot is to test ways of implementing the programme outside the hospital setting, where the programme was originally developed and tested. In other words, it is the procedure rather than the method/programme itself which is in focus. The programme runs for 20 weeks during which the child practices different assignments as well as exercises (approximately 45 minutes) each day by a trainer who receives weekly supervision. The training takes place on a one-to-one basis.

Example of Individualisation

For children, the SHARP and Start Page methods were person-alised in order to strengthen the use thereof outside the training sessions. The individualisation consists of removing or adding relevant themes as well as trying out in what settings they are useful to the child. Other adjustments include designing individual versions, e.g. altering the title and the pencil case on the front and back page of the child's sheet.

Procedure

Two procedures for the weekly supervision of the child were employed: Phone supervision and travel supervision.

Phone supervision

Supervision by phone only concerning the actual training.

Travel supervision

Supervision through the supervisor’s participation in a training session with trainer and child with the possibility of discussing the child’s performance in phone and supervision have influenced the evaluations. Furthermore, we will look at the post- training evaluation where we have asked the child whether the activities were easy or hard for him without giving the child the opportunity to ask questions and thereby influence the evaluation process.

Motivation

Trainers were asked to rate the child’s motivation on a scale from 0 (no change) over 1 (a small positive change) to 2 (a large positive change). There appears to be a larger positive change in the phone supervision group parents. Some supervisors consider that the method around the AMAT-c programme will in future be more relevant for the child. Moreover, parents and trainers rate their satisfaction between 4 and 5. It is positive that the trainer is generally more well-prepared and takes greater responsibility while the more creative interpretation can result in “wrong” training (i.e., not cognitive).

Conclusion

In conclusion, we believe that the success of the method – as well as its usefulness – depends on the cooperation and persistence of all involved, e.g. parents, children, teachers, trainers. Further, the SHARP and Start Page methods may be used as a useful supplement to existing training programmes like ordinary school (N=20; x=10.1; IQ: 101.1-13.2; SD: 4.4). The wider use of the methods in the home by the child’s parents is thus a very important part of the training.

Exercise 1: Example of Individualisation

A child with a same handicap as me would...