

Seniors sought for UW study on video game-based therapy

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People try out the Apex Legends video game during an industry event in 2019. Researchers at University of Washington are exploring the idea that a video game can help... (Patrick T. Fallon / Bloomberg, 2019)More

By

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Could a video game help seniors living with depression? Some researchers think it might, and are looking for volunteers to help find out.

Researchers are searching for adults ages 66 to 75 who have been diagnosed with depression and attention issues to participate in a clinical study

evaluating the effects of a brain-enhancing video game.

The study, which aims to enroll 207 people, follows a smaller, successful trial whose results were published in May in the journal *Translational Psychiatry*.

In the [earlier study](#) of 34 adults aged 45 to 75, almost three-quarters showed improvement in the areas of the brain that make up the cognitive control network, according to [a UW Medicine news release](#).

Participants also reported a significant reduction in depressive symptoms, the study found.

Participants were instructed to play the video game at home for 20 to 25 minutes per day, at least five times per week, for four weeks. Changes in the brain's cognitive network were measured with an MRI.

The easily disseminated video-game intervention could have significant impact on a “substantial subset of middle-aged and older adults,” the study found.

“This technology-based therapy shows promising cognitive benefits across a number of patient populations, and this trial will give us more insight on their potential use in adults with depression,” [said Patricia Areán](#), professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at the University of Washington School of Medicine.

According to researchers, people with late-life depression are known to have trouble focusing their attention on personal goals and report trouble concentrating. The researchers said in the news release that at least one-third of individuals treated

with antidepressant medications or psychotherapy are not helped.

In their May journal paper, the researchers reported that even when standard treatments improved mood symptoms, many individuals, especially older adults, were left with persistent executive dysfunction and increased risk of depression recurrence.

Areán, in collaboration with Dr. Faith Gunning at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, and Dr. Joaquin Anguera at University of California, San Francisco, are leading the new trial.

Recruitment is open to people 66 to 75 who live close to UW Medicine. For more information, call 206-616-2129 or email creativ@uw.edu.

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