UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG AUSTRALIA

Information Sheet

Study title: Non-drug training for reducing AD/HD symptoms in a school setting

Researchers: Annalise Hunt, School Psychologist, Shell Cove Public School
Professor Stuart Johnstone, School of Psychology, University of Wollongong

A child in your class is participating in a new study which will evaluate an innovative treatment for children with AD/HD or AD/HD symptoms.

What is the aim of the study?

The aim of the study is to evaluate an innovative training program implemented within a school setting. We are interested in understanding the effect of the program on a broad range of outcomes known to be associated with AD/HD, including brain activity, executive function ability, behaviour at home and school, sleep patterns, self-regulation ability, and psychological needs, compared to a waitlist control condition.

This innovative training involves computerized exercises designed to improve specific cognitive functions (e.g. memory, attention, impulse-control, relaxation). Improving these functions can reduce AD/HD behaviours. Previously, our research has focused on implementing this program in children's homes, supervised by parents. In the present study we will look at the effectiveness of implementing the program in small groups in the school setting, with training sessions supported by a School Psychologist. We use the University-owned Focus Pocus training software to deliver the neurocognitive training.

What will the child do?

As part of this study the child will undertake the following tasks:

- A pre-treatment 30-minute assessment of brain activity and memory/impulse-control ability, and sleep and psychological needs questionnaires. This will take place at Shell Cove Public School (either at lunchtime or may require the child to be removed from class for 30 minutes at a time agreed by you) and will be supervised by the School Psychologist.
- A 'treatment' condition involving 6-7 weeks of software-based training at Shell Cove Public School during allocated school time across one school term. Training involves 20 x 20-minute sessions (approx. 3 per week). These training sessions will take place at Shell Cove Public School (either at lunchtime or may require the child to be removed from class for 30 minutes at a time agreed by you) and will be supervised by the School Psychologist.
- A post-treatment 30-minute assessment of brain activity and memory/impulse-control ability, and sleep and psychological needs questionnaires. This will take place at Shell Cove Public School (either at lunchtime or may require the child to be removed from class for 30 minutes at a time agreed by you) and will be supervised by the School Psychologist.
- All children will use the NeuroSky MindWave device (see below) for the pre- and post-treatment assessment sessions and during the neurocognitive training.
- If allocated to the 'waitlist' condition: they will additionally complete the 30-minute pre- and post-treatment assessments 8 weeks apart in one school term, prior to starting the 'treatment' condition in the following term.

Some examples of the types of items in the questionnaires the child will complete include:

1. Make a rating on the statement "In a normal day I mostly have to do what I am told"
2. Answer the question "After you fell asleep, did you wake up during the night?"

3. Make a rating on the statement "I have no problems doing my usual activities"

What will you do?

As the child's classroom teacher, you will undertake the following tasks:

- Pre-treatment: complete a 40-item online questionnaire about the child. This will take 10 minutes.
- Post-treatment: complete a 40-item online questionnaire about the child. This will take 10 minutes.
- If the child is allocated to the 'waitlist' condition: you will complete the pre- and post-treatment questionnaires in one term (8 weeks apart), and again in the following term when the child progresses to the 'treatment' condition.

Some examples of the types of items in the questionnaires you will complete include:

1. Make a rating on "Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly".
2. Make a rating on "Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties".

Important things to consider

- Participation in the study is voluntary and you or the child can choose to withdraw at any stage.
- The child will be randomly assigned to a treatment or waitlist condition in the first school term. If the child is allocated to the waitlist condition, they will progress to the treatment condition in the following school term.
- All data obtained will be used only for the purposes of this study and will not be made available to any persons other than the research team. Confidentiality is assured and no individual will be identifiable. The data may be considered at a group level to examine the effects of the different treatments and this may be written for publication in a scientific journal is deemed appropriate by the researcher. If you or the child choose to withdraw consent to participate, your data will be destroyed and not included in any group analyses.
- The Focus Pocus software was designed by Professor Stuart Johnstone.

Benefits of Participation

The child will undertake neurocognitive training, an approach that has been shown to reduce AD/HD symptoms and improve behaviour.

Risks and burdens of participation

The treatment will be delivered by a registered School Psychologist and therefore there are likely to be few risks of participation. If the child becomes anxious during any part of the study the psychologist will address this using evidence-based approaches. There is a time commitment involved for the child, particularly during the treatment condition, however this will occur during school time and so will not burden them beyond their usual school day.

What will we do with the data from this study?

Group level data may be reported in a peer-reviewed scientific journal publication and/or conference presentation. No individual data will be reported.

If you have any questions about this research please email or call Professor Stuart Johnstone.

Email: sjohnsto@uow.edu.au
Phone: 02 4221 4495

This project has been approved by the UOW Social Sciences HREC (ethics protocol number 2020/404). If you have any complaints about the conduct of the study please contact the Complaints Officer, University of Wollongong/Illawarra Area Health Service Human Research Ethics Committee on 02 4221 4457 or email ethics@uow.edu.au. You and the child's participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You or they can refuse to participate and are free to withdraw from the research, at any time. Your or their refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect any relationship with Shell Cove Public School or the School of Psychology at the University of Wollongong.