



Research Week 2020

I-CONNECT (Internet-Based Conversational Engagement Clinical Trial): Reconnecting with a Forgotten Population; Can Social Interaction Improve Cognitive Functions among Socially Isolated Older Adults?

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Keywords

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Abstract

There are currently 5.8 million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have cost the United States upwards of \$290 billion this year. By the year 2050, the number of Americans with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is projected to climb to 14 million and costs are expected to rise to \$1.1 trillion. We hypothesize that increasing social interaction in older adults with normal cognition or mild cognitive impairment (MCI) could significantly improve or sustain cognitive function. Increasing daily social contact through communication technologies offers a cost-effective home-based prevention program that could slow cognitive decline and delay the onset of dementia.

Over the last 10 years, we have conducted several NIH-funded randomized controlled trials (RCTs), observing whether digital, face-to-face conversations can improve cognitive functions and enhance cognitive reserve. While our previous studies have shown positive results in our primary cognitive aims, and we expect our current project to follow this trend, there has also been a less visible, but important individual, personal, and human benefit to connecting to and socializing with isolated older adults. After working with hundreds of research volunteers in Portland, OR and Detroit, MI, we will share the study background and aims, the current status of recruitment, and some of the unexpected personal outcomes of our intervention from those volunteers who have completed our year of video chats.