

Think Health For Your Memory (THYMe) Self-management groups for people with Mild Cognitive Impairment

“From the very first session it made a difference”

Contact details: david.pearce3@nhs.net

Background

A diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) is given when a patient has memory and/or other cognitive deficits that are greater than expected but are not of a severity for a diagnosis of a dementia. Such patients are at a high risk of conversion to a dementia but at present there is no well recognised intervention to help them. There is, however, growing evidence that taking part in a multi-domain activity programme may reduce the risk of dementia in high risk individuals.

Aims

THYMe aims to provide a cost-effective, evidence-based group intervention for people with MCI. Our goal is to increase people’s confidence in managing their own health and improve their quality of life.



Our intervention

THYMe is a 5 week, group programme designed specifically for people with MCI. Each group consists of 7-8 patients each of whom are encouraged to bring along a partner or friend. Self-management is the cornerstone of the groups and each week goal-setting and memory problem solving are practiced. Group participants are encouraged to set goals which are checked against SMART criteria. The course programme also contains an educational element based around the ‘6 Pillars of a Healthy Lifestyle for the Brain’ (i.e. regular exercise, healthy diet, mental stimulation, stress management, active social life and quality sleep) to empower participants to take control of their own health.

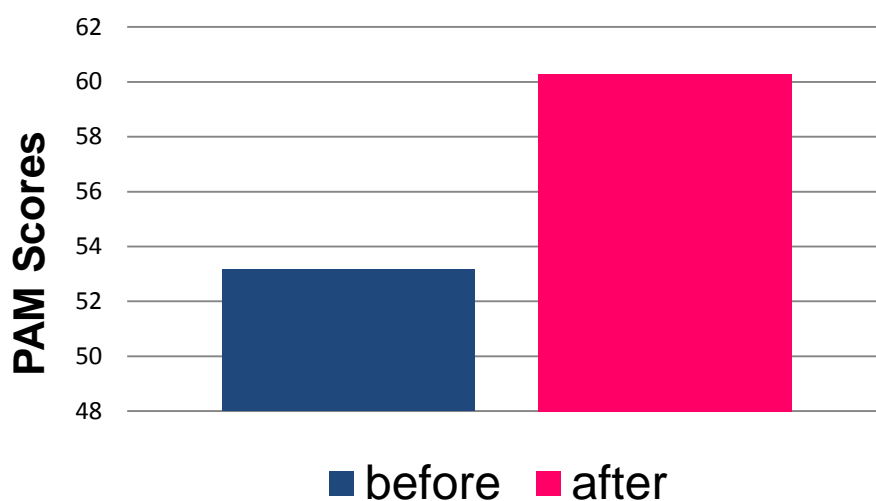


Outcomes

The THYMe project started in June 2014 and to date we have run eight groups with 79.6% of attendees successfully completing the programme* (43 patients, mean age 76.8, SD=12.7 years). Participants completed Patient Activation Measure (PAM) questionnaires before and after the intervention. We also used Goal Attainment Scores (GAS) to measure self-reported outcomes. Both PAM and GAS results showed significant improvements from the first to last group, see Figure 1 and 2 below.

*successful completion taken as attendance at a minimum of 4 out of 5 sessions

Average Patient Activation Measure (PAM) Scores before and after the intervention



In the future

The THYMe programme will be manualised and freely available. We are also planning a multi-centre randomised control trial comparing THYMe to treatment as usual i.e. providing advice and giving out self-help resources.

Case study: Anne and Tom's Story

Tom (patient): I first heard about the groups from the doctor in the memory clinic... It was all helpful and I think that everyone takes something different away from it.

Anne (wife): I could probably say that I learned more than Tom (laughs). He often said that my memory was worse than his, but a lot of my problems were stress related, to the point that I would forget silly things. Now I know I need to be more aware of controlling stress, I think I am doing it much better these days. During the groups we challenged ourselves... Tom did some cooking, we did more walking and drank more water... we were also doing more word games and SUDOKU...

Tom: I have always found word games hard, however after the groups, we started playing cards again, something that we both enjoy

Anne: I used to always worry about Tom. I was finding it hard to 'let him do things alone'. Now, even if he makes a mistake or bangs his head I let him do it. THYMe groups helped both of us... and we continue to challenge ourselves, we even got a white board where we write our goals down!

Fig. 1 $p < 0.0001$, (mean of PAM at start minus PAM at end equals -7.115 , 95% confidence interval -10.363 to -3.867)

Goal Attainment Scores (GAS) at the start and end of intervention

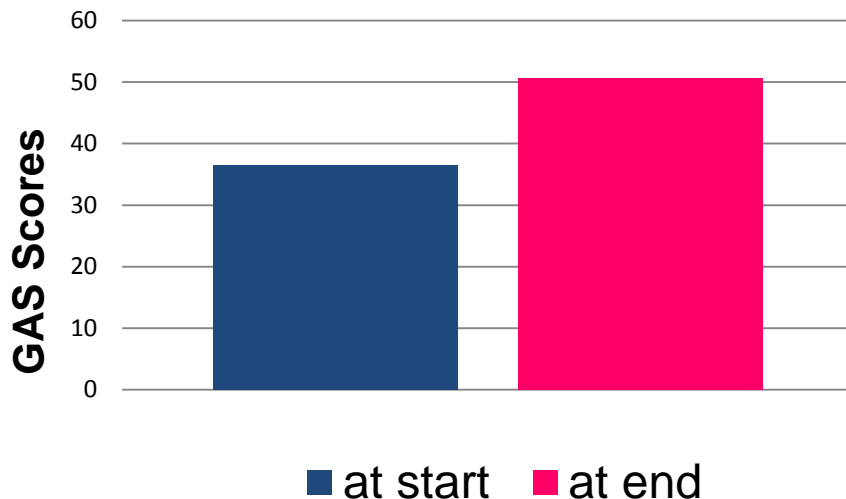


Fig. 2 Mann-U, $p < 0.01$

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