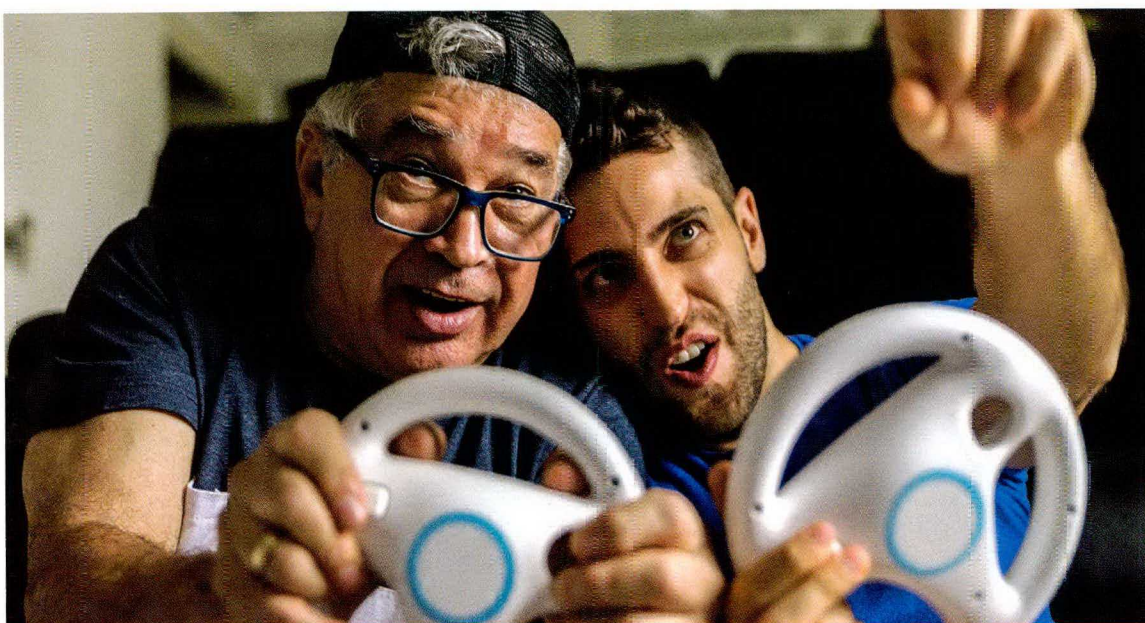




Exergaming May Improve Independence Among Older Adults

Question of the Month

When you offer training advice to clients, are you discussing the significance of sleep? If yes, are you using sleep trackers and monitoring results? Please describe how you are educating clients regarding the role of sleep in effective training and weight management and share any success stories you have had.

We want to hear from you! Email Joy Keller at jkeller@ideafit.com.



Maybe you've thought about integrating exergaming—exercise combined with video games and other elements of technology—into some of your classes or sessions. Don't forget to include older adults. A recent study found that seniors with mild cognitive impairment (MCI), a precursor to Alzheimer's, showed significant improvement in certain complex thinking and memory skills after exergaming.

The study, which appeared in the May issue of *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, found that older adults who used the interactive features in video games experienced greater cognitive health benefits than those who exercised in a more traditional way. Researchers targeted older adults who had been diagnosed with or were at risk for MCI.

Initially, more than 100 seniors were enrolled in the study, which was funded by the National Institute on Aging. Over 6 months, 14 people (men and women; average age: 78) kept up with regular exergaming. The first group pedaled along a scenic virtual-reality bike path several times a week. The second group tried a more challenging brain task: pedaling while playing a video game that included chasing dragons and collecting coins. The bikes were placed in various places,

including hospitals, community centers and independent living centers.

Researchers compared the results with data collected from a different group of seniors who played video games on a laptop but did not pedal and with data from participants in a previous research study who rode a traditional stationary bike with no gaming component.

At the end of the trial, cyclists in both the group that pedaled along a virtual bike path and those who chased dragons and collected coins experienced significantly better executive function than the other groups.

"Executive function is like the CEO of the brain," said Cay Anderson-Hanley, associate professor of psychology at Union College and the study's lead author, in a press release. "It is key to remaining independent in later life. For example, it allows you to cook two things on the stove at once. It makes sure you don't forget that you are boiling water while also having something in the oven."

Researchers noted that both groups garnered benefits in verbal memory and physical function, suggesting it could be a good idea to incorporate exergaming into a daily exercise regime for older adult clients.

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