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News release

Alzheimer's Society and BBC launch brain training trial with a 'Bang'

Alzheimer's Society has teamed up with the BBC's Lab UK to launch Brain Test Britain, a unique trial that will seek an answer to the question: Does brain training really work?

Launching on BBC One tonight (1930, Monday, 7 September 2009), Brain Test Britain will investigate the effects of brain training on mental fitness. Initial results will be announced in a Bang Goes the Theory special, early next year. The experiment will continue for a further nine months looking closely at whether brain training can maintain or even improve the brain. Research teams from Kings College London and Cambridge University will analyse the results. Alzheimer's Society hopes results will be a step towards solving whether brain training can reduce the risk of dementia.

Celebrities and BBC presenters will be pitched against each other as they get 'brain fit'. Supporters include BBC One's Evan Davis and Alzheimer's Society ambassadors Richard McCourt of Dick and Dom, Tania Bryer and Russell Grant.

Richard McCourt of Dick and Dom, Alzheimer's Society Ambassador says,

'I always wondered if any of these brain training gadgets and games really work. I'm looking forward to being trained up and finding out a lot more about how our brains function. The more we know about the brain, the nearer we'll come to finding a cure for dementia – and that's the reason why I want to be involved.'

Professor Clive Ballard, Director of Research, Alzheimer's Society and Professor of Age-Related Diseases at King's College London says,

'Every week thousands of people spend time exercising their brain using some form of computer-based brain training, but the jury's still out on whether exercising your brain can boost your brain power. As Brain Test Britain asks the question, everyone can help with the answer. With one million people set to develop dementia in the next 10 years, it's vital we understand the truth behind the old saying use it or lose it. Join us today and have fun while helping to solve one of the biggest mysteries of the brain. Does brain training really work?'

Brain Test Britain will be powered by Lab UK, a BBC website that enables the public to participate in groundbreaking scientific experiments online.

Volunteers are being asked to train their brains for 10 minutes at a time, three times a week, for at least six weeks. A one-off 'Bang Goes The Theory' special will reveal the results of the Brain Test Britain experiment early next year. Alzheimer's Society advises that leading a healthy lifestyle is the best way to reduce your risk of dementia. The best evidence is to eat a healthy diet, keep active, don't smoke, get blood pressure and cholesterol checked and keep a healthy weight.

Ends

INTERVIEWS AND SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Notes to editors:

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To take part in Brain Test Britain or to find out more about the experiment please visit <http://www.bbc.co.uk/labuk/experiments/braintestbritain>

To read Alzheimer's Society information about Brain Test Britain please visit www.alzheimers.org.uk/braintraining after 7 September 2009.

Alzheimer's Society funds research to improve the lives of people today and find a cure for tomorrow.

Brain Test Britain will run for one year. Participants perform Brain Training exercises online for 10 minutes at a time, three times a week for at least six weeks, but can continue to train for up to a year.

Brain skills, such as memory and reasoning, will be assessed with benchmarking tests completed by participants at the start of the trial and after six weeks. If participants choose to brain train for longer than six weeks (and we hope they will!), they will be asked to retake benchmarking tests after three months, six months and a year.

The trial is open to anyone aged 18 or over. Alzheimer's Society is particularly keen to recruit people over 60 as these participants will help to answer important questions about whether Brain Training could maintain brain function and whether it could play a role in developing treatments to prevent dementia.

One in three people over 65 will die with dementia.

Alzheimer's Society research shows that 700,000 people in the UK have a form of dementia, more than half have Alzheimer's disease. In less than 20 years nearly a million people will be living with dementia. This will soar to 1.7 million people by 2051.

Alzheimer's Society champions the rights of people living with dementia and the millions of people who care for them.

Alzheimer's Society works in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Alzheimer's Society needs to raise money to help people live well with dementia today and for research to find a cure for tomorrow. You can donate now by calling 0845 306 0898 or visiting www.alzheimers.org.uk

If you have any questions about how dementia may affect you, Alzheimer's Society provides a National Dementia Helpline, the number is 0845 300 0336 or visit www.alzheimers.org.uk