

Brainwave-R, Cognitive strategies and techniques for brain injury rehabilitation

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Published in: Re-New, The Journal of Rehab UK, Vol 5, No 3, p 9 (2001)

Kit Malia and Anne Brannagan set up Brain Tree Training in 1997. Its aim is to provide practical course for people living with brain injury, be they the individuals themselves, their families, or the professionals involved in rehabilitation. Up to November 2000, over 2000 people had attended courses. Brainwave-R is beginning to have an important and well-earned place within the developing world of neurological rehabilitation.

Kit Malia holds a research degree in neuropsychology and is the only certified cognitive rehabilitation therapist (CRT) in the UK. After working as a teacher for people with learning disabilities, he spent over ten years working as a CRT for adults who live with acquired brain injury. He has published scientific papers on cognitive and psychosocial rehabilitation and has lectured extensively at home and abroad. He is on the board of directors of the Society for Cognitive Rehabilitation USA, and is chair of the European Committee of the SCR.

Brainwave-R is a comprehensive pen-to-paper based cognitive rehabilitation programme which, in Kit's words: "provides an off-the-shelf and ready-made package...relatives can have information and materials that are designed for them. The brain-injured people themselves love the structure provided by the exercises, and over 90% of people improve by using them. It gives good feedback, it works on awareness, and the materials are there ready for people to use in a packaged format."

So, what are these "exercises"? Brainwave-R is divided into five hierarchically graded modules: attention, visual processing, memory, information processing and executive functions. The programme comprises three modules:

- **Education.** An overview of current theories relevant to rehabilitation that is designed to be used by the therapist with the client and family to ensure good awareness and understanding of the problem area.
- **Therapist instruction.** Rating scales, clinical guidelines, suggestions for how to involve the family, a performance summary chart, and questions to encourage the client to determine the functional relevance of each exercise.
- **Client exercises**

Things that most people do naturally, like the everyday management of their personal and working lives, can be far from natural for a brain-injured person. Therefore, one of the client exercises concentrates on this and involves the person predicting their ability to complete an exercise, rating their eventual performance before it is marked, and confronting the extra pressures of distraction and time.

Being aware of the number of people who, following their initial rehabilitation, suddenly have little or no continuation of therapy, Kit stressed the importance of help to the rest of the family, who in most cases also face a big change in their lives. Brainwave-R provides the crucial connection between the brain-injured person and their family in terms of increased knowledge and understanding of the condition.

As Kit says: "A family member wants to do the best they can for their relation, but they don't necessarily have the knowledge or confidence. Many of them, by instinct, will be doing the right thing, but they don't *know* that, so Brainwave-R materials enable them to structure that help much better."