

A Low-Risk, Low-Cost Way to Slow Cognitive Decline

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Hello. I'm Dr Arefa Cassoobhoy, a primary care internist, Medscape advisor, and senior medical director for WebMD. Welcome to Medscape Morning Report, our 1-minute news story for primary care.

In the United States, black patients have twice the rate of dementia as white patients.

[A new study focused on this group](#), working with more than 200 older African Americans with mild cognitive impairment. The researchers tested behavioral activation as a method to slow cognitive decline and prevent dementia. The intervention uses goal setting and action plans to reinforce healthy cognitive, physical, and social activity.

The action plans rely on visual cues, written schedules, and step-by-step sequencing to complete a goal, like meeting a friend for a walk. The control group in the study received standard supportive treatment. The primary outcome for cognition was measured by a decline in recalled words. The secondary outcome was a decline in functional ability.

The results are impressive.

At 24 months, the rate of cognitive decline was 1.2% in the behavioral-activation group compared with 9.3% in the supportive-therapy group. To give context, prior studies suggest that the expected decline would be between 12% and 41%.

Behavioral activation appears to be a low-cost, low-risk intervention that you can consider adding to treatment for your patients with mild cognitive impairment.

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