



**Testimony to the White House Conference On Aging
June 21, 2005 (Santa Clara, CA meeting)**

I am Jeff Zimman, CEO of Posit Science Corporation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Most challenges of aging have their roots in brain health. This is certainly true of diseases whose incidence rise dramatically with age -- such as Alzheimer's, Mild Cognitive Impairment, Parkinsons, aphasia and depression, amongst others. But brain health also goes to most other issues of aging, including mobility, autonomy and living a life with dignity.

Numerous studies show that we do not have to accept cognitive decline as an inevitable part of aging. Neuroscientists have proven that there is lifelong neuroplasticity – that the brain can change itself physically, chemically and functionally at any age.

Aging experts accept the maxim “use it or lose it,” but most of us do not know what it is we should do. Should we keep working? Do crosswords? Learn a foreign language?

At Posit Science Corporation, we have put together a global consortium of brain scientists to develop, test, refine and validate exercises that rejuvenate the brain. Brain exercise can improve cognitive function in older adults by decades. It is also highly likely we can delay, arrest and even reverse the effects of many brain disorders.

In 1961, President Kennedy called on this nation to launch a new initiative to promote physical fitness. Today, we need a similar call to promote cognitive fitness.

President Kennedy said “The strength of our democracy and our country is no greater in the final analysis than the well being of our citizens. The vigor of our country...no more substantial than the vitality of our countrymen.” His views remain true today.

President George W. Bush has called for an “ownership society.” Our government must support programs that encourage individuals to take ownership, responsibility and action for their health as they age. Doing this should provide even greater resources for a safety net where it is needed.

Let us call on our government to launch a new initiative with the vigor displayed four decades ago. While President Kennedy's initiative emphasized the importance of physical fitness to our youth, this initiative must emphasize the importance of cognitive fitness to all of us as we age.

There is a role for families, communities and businesses in promoting cognitive fitness. And there is a role -- a leadership role -- for government.



This initiative should reach from urban centers to rural communities, from disadvantaged communities to those blessed with advantage. It should include three elements:

- 1) A call to individuals, families, communities, businesses and government to promote scientifically-validated activities that enhance cognitive fitness in the home, in community centers and in the workplace;
- 2) Grants from agencies and the NIH to fund the development, testing, refinement and validation of activities that enhance cognitive fitness; and
- 3) Reimbursement under Medicare and Medicaid for validated programs, with further incentives for individuals who complete such programs through premium discounts for Medicare Supplemental Insurance and enhanced Medicaid subsidies.

In conclusion: Our ability to actually enhance brain function as we age changes everything. It dramatically reduces costs for care, it moves our focus on technology from addressing failure to promoting success and it recognizes that hope and self-actualization should stretch across the entire lifespan. We must make a call for cognitive fitness central to our national strategy to improve how all of us age.

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Posit Science is a venture-backed company based in San Francisco that is developing brain health programs. Its programs are based on recent breakthroughs in the science of neuroplasticity – the ability of the brain to change itself at any age. The company's initial offerings are targeted at healthy aging. Its website is www.positscience.com.