

Brain injury centre working on repair kit

The Halifax Brain Repair Centre will put a brain repair system similar to a computer game to serious use in a new project.

The centre will use a \$1.8-million award from the Atlantic Innovation Fund to establish a cognitive repair laboratory. The lab will develop a "cognitive repair kit," a computerized, game-like set of mental training exercises to treat common cognitive impairments, principal investigator Gail Eskes said in a news release Wednesday.

Problems with attention, memory and thinking often result from brain injuries or diseases such as stroke and Parkinson's disease.

"This AIF funding will allow us to address the critical need for the development of effective, evidence-based cognitive treatments to improve the lives of patients and families," Eskes said.

Lab researchers will work to develop accessible treatments that patients can use at home under therapeutic supervision.

Neurological diseases and injuries are leading causes of death and disability in Canada. While medical advances have saved more lives, most patients are left with serious disabilities.

The lab will build on recent research that indicates the brain has the ability to create new connections when established ones are injured, Eskes said. The cognitive repair kit will provide targeted, intensive training to enhance the growth of the right connections and significantly improve a person's ability to perform daily tasks.

The brain centre is a collaborative effort involving Dalhousie University, Capital Health and the IWK Health Centre.