

Nootropics: A new frontier for brain function and behaviour?

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Although the term 'nootropic' is relatively new, humans have been exploiting the cognitive enhancing and brain health promoting properties of herbs and other plants for millennia. Indeed, ancient cultures and medical systems frequently used various plants such as *Ginkgo biloba*, *Bacopa monnieri*, *Hericum erinaceus* and *Salvia rosmarinus* to manipulate arousal state or improve memory, herbs that are still applied today. In the past few decades, the evidence base in support of the use of these and other plant extracts for optimal functioning of the brain both over the short and longer term has grown, resulting in a global multibillion dollar market for nootropic supplements. The Brain, Performance and Nutrition Research Centre at Northumbria University is a global leader in the investigation of the brain function and behavioural effects of naturally occurring nootropics. This talk will examine some of the recent studies in the field that, utilising novel and innovative methodologies, have advanced our understanding of the varied effects of nootropics on the brain and behaviour. In doing so, we also raise the question of how close we are to personalising nutritional approaches to brain health, a frontier that many argue we must now work to push forward.