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This Bulletin is published monthly and circulated to members of the International Bridge Press Association, comprising the world's leading journalists, authors and editors of news, books and articles about contract bridge, with an estimated readership of some 200 million people who enjoy the most widely-played of all card games.

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BRIDGE & SCIENCE

By Marek Malysa, Gdansk

(Dr. Malysa is a retired Mathematics professor from Gdansk University, Chair of the WBF Bridge and Science Committee, organiser of the 2016 World Bridge Games in Wroclaw, an author, a bridge teaching programme developer, the organiser of several scientific conferences and a Polish Bridge Union vice-president. – Ed.)

Some time ago, the WBF established a Bridge & Science Committee in order to obtain serious scientific results and to use them in the promotion of our game. It wasn't unique, since scientific research had already been established: Samantha Punch of the University of Sterling had created the Sociology of Bridge, with its own Ph.D. programme; Véronique Ventos, with NukkAI, is exploring Artificial Intelligence to be used in bridge; and the first and second International Scientific Conferences dedicated to our game took place in Poland (while the next one was in Croatia).

Following twenty-year-old data from the University of California, Berkeley, about the health advantages of playing bridge, academics from Nicolas Copernicus University in Torun (Poland) started research on how playing bridge can delay the onset of dementia and, particularly, Alzheimer's Disease. Despite some problems caused by COVID-19, we completed our pilot research in two Welfare Houses and, on this basis, we shall start the main research soon.

The main question is, can playing bridge prevent or even reverse dementia? We all know that playing bridge keeps us in fine mental shape (the premise is that Cognitive Reserve – defined as the mind's resistance to brain damage – increases when we play bridge) but strong scientific proof is needed. M.C. Diamond's report tells us that playing bridge lowers the chance of Alzheimer's by as much as 75%. In my opinion, that's an underestimate.

To test all that, we tried to teach bridge to patients of the Alzheimer's Centre in Warsaw, all of them diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease (in their case, Mild Cognitive Impairment). They were brought by their families to the Centre and taken back home each working day. The patients had three hours of bridge lessons a week. Initially, they couldn't count to ten and keep their cards properly arranged but, after six months, it wasn't a problem for them any more. They played bridge – simplified – with no bidding, but taking tricks, counting to 13 and 40. This was a huge, very pleasant, surprise for all of the bridge experts and the Alzheimer's Centre staff. MCI patients were actually able to learn a brand new skill!

Our research group also had other kinds of therapy like dancing, dog therapy, while a control group also had the other therapies but had no bridge lessons at

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All in a Day's Work (with Ron Tacchi)

Despite the pandemic, the workload of the average journalist has in many cases increased. Not least in the creation of online Bulletins. One such stalwart is Ron Tacchi and he is currently editing for the 2020 Saudi Bridge Championships:

<https://www.bridgewebs.com/sbcchamp/>

In our discussions (we are working on so many projects that a daily Skype is obligatory), he has developed a habit of posing defensive problems that might be used in some online material we are preparing for Bridge Baron. Here is one such problem:

Board 1. Dealer North. Neither Vul.

♠ J 9 8 5
♥ A J 8 2
♦ 8 4 2
♣ 9 3

With this modest South hand you see the auction unfold like this:

West	North	East	South
Zorlu	Jaber	Avcioglu	Malkawi
—	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣ ¹	Pass	1♦ ²	Pass
1♠ ³	Pass	1NT ⁴	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

1. Various possibilities
2. Hearts
3. Strong, natural, denies 3-card heart support
4. 6-8 HCP; 5 hearts

You elect to lead the four of diamonds and this is what you can see:

♠ A K Q 7
♥ K
♦ Q 10 9 5
♣ A 10 8 2

♠ J 9 8 5
♥ A J 8 2
♦ 8 4 2
♣ 9 3

When declarer calls for dummy's ten partner covers with the jack and declarer wins with the ace and plays back a diamond for the nine and king. Partner switches to the king of clubs. Declarer wins with dummy's ace and leads the king of hearts, which you take with the ace as partner follows with the five. When you exit with the nine of clubs, it is covered by the ten and jack. Partner exits with the six of diamonds, declarer following with the seven and cashing dummy's diamonds followed by the top spades.

I trust that you were wide awake and unblocked the spade suit! If you hadn't, declarer would have thrown you in with the fourth spade to lead into declarer's queen-ten of hearts. This was the full deal:

♠ 10 3 2
♥ 9 7 5
♦ K J 6
♣ K Q J 7

♠ A K Q 7
♥ K
♦ Q 10 9 5
♣ A 10 8 2

♠ 6 4
♥ Q 10 6 4 3
♦ A 7 3
♣ 6 5 4

♠ J 9 8 5
♥ A J 8 2
♦ 8 4 2
♣ 9 3

They also reached three notrump in the other room, but North led a top club and declarer had no real chance, finishing two down.

NEWS & VIEWS



all. After one year, the loss of cognitive ability in the bridge group was more than two times lower than that in the control group. That is impressive but, unluckily, statistically not significant enough. So deeper and wider research, in terms of evaluating methods, is needed.

That's why the non-profit foundation *Bridge to the People* (<https://www.facebook.com/pg/BridgetothePeople/reviews/>)

will continue financing research and searching for sources of financing. More about them, and how to donate, can be found on their web page:

www.bridgetothepeople.eu

Their first research report from the pilot stage can be found at:

<http://www.worldbridge.org/2020/06/18/bridge-and-dementia-prevention/> .

The foundation, together with Gdansk Medical University, will soon start research on Playing Bridge and the Immune System. We are seeking funds for this as well.

How this kind of promotional message works was observed in Poland within my program BRIDGE60+. Using a dementia prevention slogan, I recruited 310 clubs (created in the program) containing thousands of elderly people, giving them a chance to avoid social isolation and build the cognitive reserve necessary to avoid or at least delay the onset of dementia.

All of this shows that whenever serious scientific research results are ready, we (VBF, EBL and other bridge organizations) will have in our hands strong promotional arguments that playing bridge carries additional values worth sponsoring.