

## New app could replace Ritalin



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Spotted: Researchers at Cambridge University's [Behavioural and Clinical Neuroscience Institute](#) have developed an app that could help sufferers of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The app, called Decoder, aims to help users improve concentration. The game sends users on virtual "missions" to foil an international criminal organisation. Users must remember and identify different sequences of numbers while being distracted. Every time the user successfully remembers a sequence, the app unlocks clues to the location of the "mission".

[Barbara Sahakian](#) and [George Savulich](#), co-inventors of the app, found that users who played Decoder saw improvements to concentration, with effects similar to those when taking stimulants such as methylphenidate (Ritalin) or nicotine. The team's research was published in the January 2019 edition of [Frontiers in Behavioural Neuroscience](#). The app is currently available for iPhones, and will be available on Android later in 2019.

Takeaway: Drugs to treat ADHD make up a booming industry, with as many as 1 million people in the UK taking Ritalin alone. Pharmaceuticals can have potentially serious side effects. The Decoder app could offer a safer alternative. The researchers suggest the app may also help improve attention impairment associated with schizophrenia and brain injury. In the future, apps like this may aid in the treatment of a wide variety of mental disorders.

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