

Focusing: Brain, not age, important

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University of Illinois scientists say they've determined that when it comes to focusing on a task, the brain and not age is most important.

The researchers at the university's Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology said some folks more than 60 years old are as mentally sharp as 22-year-olds. Others struggle.

The differences became apparent through the use of functional magnetic resonance imaging of the brains of 40 individuals ranging in age from 19 to 87. The scientists found less white matter in the frontal lobes of those who struggle with focusing.

"We found that both performance and brain-activation differences of older good performers and the older poor performers are predicted by changes in brain structure, specifically by the volume of white matter connecting the right and left hemispheres of the frontal lobes," said Arthur Kramer, a professor of psychology.

The study is reported in the current issue of the quarterly journal *Psychology and Aging*.

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