When parents consider video games, many thoughts come to mind -- but a medical prescription may not be one of them.

Two U.S.-based companies, Akili Interactive Labs and Posit Science, have completed small, clinical trials aimed towards achieving FDA approval for its interactive brain games as a therapeutic option for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Yes, they want you to give your youngster a(nother) video game in hopes of treating their condition. Absolutely preposterous, you say!

Or is it?

ADHD is the most common childhood mental disorder, with patients exhibiting behaviors representative of hyperactivity, impulsivity and inattention. As of 2011, according to the CDC, 11 percent of children between the ages of 4 and 17 -- a total of 6.4 million kids -- have been diagnosed with ADHD. Of that, 17.5 percent were not receiving either medication or mental health counseling, the two most common treatment options.

This begs two questions: How are these children being treated? Or rather: Are they being treated at all?

This untreated 17.5 percent represents an opportunity for companies like Akili and Posit to appeal to parents, especially those who don't like the idea of medicating their 5-year old with stimulants, as well as managing the notable side effects that come with it.

At the recent annual meeting of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, Akili presented its study conditions:
Eighty children across three centers enrolled in a four-week study, playing the video game "Project: EVO" five days per week, for 30 minutes each day, at home.

Ranging from ages 8 to 12, half the children had been diagnosed with ADHD and were not being treated with any form of pharmacologic intervention.

The other half served as the controls, being deemed to have normal age-appropriate cognitive functioning and no psychiatric diagnoses.

"Project: EVO" was designed to engage a player’s brain, requiring multiple streams of information to be processed simultaneously. It required participants to frequently adapt and make spontaneous decisions, while integrating the sensory and motor components of shifting the tablet itself.

As with most video games, the more proficient the a player got, the harder the game became. The hope was that stimulating the cognitive functions would translate into real life cognitive benefits over time.

Researchers were most concerned with determining the feasibility and safety of the game as well as level of compliance. As for preliminary clinical trial findings, those included:

The game was able to hold a participant's interest; there was 81 percent compliance, with no participants opting to drop out of the study.

There were no adverse events reported.

In terms of efficacy, improvements in cognitive function, particularly attention, were seen. Utilizing a neuropsychological assessment researchers assessed changes in attention, and there was a statistically significant improvement in the scores of ADHD children, while the scores of the control group did not change significantly.

Using feedback from the FDA and other critics, the company is planning a larger controlled clinical trial, aimed at improving the game itself, conducting comparative studies with a placebo game, as well as looking into dosing (duration and frequency of game playing).