

Montrose Secam's Assistive Mouse Adapter, First Impressions

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According to the manufacturer (<http://www.montrosesecam.com>), this mouse adapter was “invented by IBM to address the problem [of hand tremor]. It works by filtering out the unintentional movements of the hand caused by a tremor. The effect of the adapter is much smoother movement of the cursor on the screen and greatly improved accuracy of mouse operation.”

I tested this device with two people, one a 78-year-old man with hereditary intention tremors, the other a young man with Tardive Dyskinesia that generated persistent tremors in his hands. Both reported difficulty using a standard mouse. During testing, the elder participant found that, if he rested his hand on a wrist rest or directly on the table while grasping the mouse, his tremors could be controlled. (Hitting keys on the keyboard and other “floating” tasks were more difficult.) This device was not useful for him. The man with dyskinesia had tremors that caused his fingers to shake or flutter, rather than his whole arm. The Adapter did not help - except for its ability to ignore very brief mouse button taps. He found that using a Kensington ExpertMouse Pro trackball was more effective than a mouse. “Closing in” on a target was still a challenge, so I slowed down the acceleration in the Kensington Mouseworks software and enabled the option whereby pressing down a modifier key slowed down the cursor movement to a pixel-by-pixel crawl. (Keyboard access was improved by using a BigKeys LX - more than when using a standard keyboard with a keyguard.)

Summary: At \$99, this might be a helpful tool to keep around the lab, but the user's tremors have to be rather dramatic for this device to be beneficial.