A META-ANALYSIS EXAMINING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTIONS (MBIS) FOR HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS


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Abstract

The demanding nature of working in healthcare settings confers a particular vulnerability to stress among healthcare practitioners, has been shown to impair employee performance and to contribute to staff sickness absence. There is evidently a need for effective interventions to enhance the psychological wellbeing of health care professionals (Shapiro, Shapiro & Schwartz, 2000). This paper presents a meta-analysis of studies that have examined the psychological benefits of mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) for healthcare practitioners.

The authors searched Web of Knowledge, Psycinfo and Scopus from the first available year to November 2013. Studies were included if they contained validated outcome measures, mindfulness meditation practice, a randomized control design with exactable data and health care staff/trainees.

462 articles were obtained from literature searches, only twelve met our rigorous inclusion criteria and were included in the final review. Overall, relative to control conditions, MBIs were associated with significantly lower levels of staff stress/distress at post-intervention.

This meta-analysis of methodologically sound RCTs provides credible evidence to support the benefits to emotional wellbeing for healthcare practitioners undertaking MBIs. Limitations of studies include a reliance on inactive control conditions, making the specific benefits of mindfulness practice and principles difficult to ascertain. Potential secondary benefits of staff mindfulness training for health care services and service users are also discussed.

MBIs may be one alternative way to promote healthcare practitioner wellbeing and potential secondary benefits to health care services and service users warrants further research.