

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction: research

Since its inception in 1979, many thousands of people have completed the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, developed at the Center for Mindfulness at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center, USA, by Jon Kabat-Zinn and colleagues. The Stress Reduction program has been at the cutting edge of mind/body medicine for twenty-five years and represents participatory and integrative medicine at its best. Published evaluations of the medical outcomes resulting from patient participation in MBSR have shown a 35% reduction in the number of medical symptoms and a 40% reduction in psychological symptoms (stable over four years) (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 1985, 1986, 1992, 1998, Miller et al 1995, etc). Patients coming to the program are not separated by their referral diagnosis, so these outcomes data apply across all the diagnostic categories that have been referred. Patients suffering from the following conditions may benefit from Mindfulness training.

Coronary Artery Disease

The addition of meditation training to standard cardiac rehabilitation regimens has been shown to reduce mortality (41% decrease during the first two years following, and 46% reduction in recurrence rates) morbidity, psychological distress, and some biological risk factors (plasma lipids, weight, blood pressure, blood glucose) (Linden 1996, Zammara 1996). Meditation practice alone has been shown to reduce exercise-induced myocardial ischemia in patients with coronary artery disease (Zammara 1996, Ornish 1983).

Hypertension

Meditation training has been shown to reduce blood pressure in amounts comparable to the changes that are produced by medication and other lifestyle modifications such as weight loss, sodium restriction, and increased aerobic exercise (Schneider 1995, Linden & Chambers 1994, Alexander 1994).

Cancer

A randomised trial with cancer outpatients showed Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) was effective in significantly decreasing mood disturbance (65%), including depression, anxiety, anger and confusion, and also in decreasing the symptoms of stress such as cardiopulmonary and gastrointestinal symptoms (Specia 2000). These changes were sustained at six month follow up (Carlson 2001). Psychological distress was lessened in women with early breast cancer (Bridge 1988). Anticipatory nausea and vomiting due to chemotherapy is also inhibited (Green 1991).

Chronic Pain

Mindfulness meditation has been shown to reduce both the experience of pain and its inhibition of patients' everyday activities. Further, mood disturbance and psychological symptomatology (including anxiety and depression) are also reduced. Pain-related drug utilisation was decreased and activity levels and self esteem increased. This was in marked contrast to a traditional pain clinic comparison group, which showed no change on these dimensions (Kabat-Zinn 1982, 85). These gains were nearly all maintained at four-year follow-up (Kabat-Zinn 1987).

Fibromyalgia

Mindfulness training resulted in clinically significant improvements in physical condition and both psychological and social spheres (Kaplan 1993, Goldenberg 1994, Weissbecker 2002).

Diabetes - Type I

Meditation training significantly lowered glucose levels in patients with poorly controlled type I diabetes (McGrady 1991).

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Meditation training has been shown to be effective in improving this condition (Blanchard 1992).

Anxiety

Mindfulness training has been shown to clinically reduce symptoms of anxiety, psychological distress and secondary depression (Kabat-Zinn 1992). These changes were maintained at 3-year follow-up (Miller 1995).

Asthma/Respiratory Disorders

Relaxation training has been shown to improve the psychological well-being, functional status and frequency of attacks of asthma patients as well as adherence to treatment (Devine 1996). It has also been shown to have a beneficial effect on dyspnea and psychological well-being among adults with obstructive pulmonary disease (Devine & Percy, in press).

Psoriasis Recently published research has shown that mindfulness meditation increases skin clearing rates four-fold when used in conjunction with phototherapy and photochemotherapy (Kabat-Zinn 1998).

Headache

Meditation has been shown to decrease headache activity (Anastasio 1987).

Depression

The skills derived from mindfulness training and cognitive therapy have been shown effective in significantly reducing the recurrence of major depressive episodes in patients who have been treated for depression (Teasdale 2000).

Multiple Sclerosis

Training in mindfulness of movement resulted in MS patients reporting improvement over a broad range of symptoms, including balance (Mills 2000).

Health-Related Quality of Life

MBSR has been shown to significantly improve health-related quality of life. (functional status, well-being, reduced physical symptoms, psychological distress) (Reibel 2001)

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