


AUT

The impact of Mindfulness training on residential aged care staff



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What is Mindfulness?

- Involves:
 - Paying attention to the present moment purposefully and non-judgementally
 - Reflecting on emotions, thoughts and feelings that occur moment by moment
 - Staying focused on one thing, such as the breath, and gently returning one's focus to the sensations of breathing, whenever you become aware that your mind has strayed
- Participants in Mindfulness courses are taught to develop sustained awareness of the present moment and reduce ruminating about the past or worrying about the future

What is NOT mindfulness?

Being on 'Auto-pilot'



- Driving to Taupo you cannot remember anything about the last 20 kms of road
- Eating your lunch while working on your computer and not really tasting or savouring the food fully
- At an important meeting you are going over and over in your mind an argument that you had with your son at breakfast that morning
- At a concert of beautiful choral music you are busy mentally planning for tomorrow's work team meeting



Benefits of Mindfulness

- Popularised in Western health professions by American physician, Jon Kabat-Zinn
- Rapidly growing evidence base for its helpfulness in a wide range of health conditions
- Has been found to be beneficial for both clinical and non-clinical populations
- Associated with positive effects on:
 - Somatic (physical) health
 - Mental health - decreasing levels of depression, stress, anxiety
 - Wellbeing
 - Quality of life



Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction: typical programme

- Various types of Mindfulness-based interventions exist
- One of the most commonly utilised is Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Typically, MBSR consists of -
 - An 8 week programme
 - 2 hour sessions (+1 full day)
 - Various techniques to improve concentration and awareness
 - Meditation and Breathing exercises
 - Body scan (directing attention around body)
 - Mindful walking
 - Mindful eating



Some of our team's recent/current research

- Measuring mindfulness
- Mindfulness for students at AUT (webinar)
- Mindfulness for schoolchildren
- Clinical groups –
 - Mindfulness for people with stroke (depression) – commenced July 2017
 - Mindfulness for people with osteoarthritis (pain) – application for funding



How do we measure Mindfulness/the impact of Mindfulness?

- Questionnaires (subjective measures)
 - Mindfulness skills
 - Psychological constructs, e.g.
 - Mood
 - Stress
 - Quality of life etc
- Physical measures (objective measures)
 - EEG
 - Heart Rate Variability
 - Blood tests



Mindfulness training of care staff in a residential aged care facility



Background

- Caregiving can be stressful and emotionally challenging work
- While little Mindfulness research has been undertaken with care workers in aged care facilities, some of the benefits of mindfulness training reported for health professionals generally have been:
 - A reduction in emotional exhaustion (burnout)
 - Improvement in their ability to be attentive to their patients and to respond to patients more effectively
 - Increased empathy and appreciation of others
 - Improvement in mood state
 - Higher levels of job-related personal accomplishment



Aims of the care staff study

- Generally in our mindfulness research we are interested in:
 - Individual differences in acquiring mindfulness skills
 - The physiological and psychological changes that occur with becoming more mindful
- And specifically, in this study, the impact mindfulness training would have on a number of variables relevant to care work



Participants

- 2 facilities participated
- 25 care staff recruited in total: 14 from Facility 1 and 11 from Facility 2
- 2 employees left their employment during the study, leaving 23 participants who completed the Mindfulness course
- Of the 23 'completers' –
 - 17 Caregivers
 - 6 'other' staff (Nurses, Administrators etc)



Mindfulness course

- Based on the typical MBSR programme but shortened to 6 weeks x 1 hour sessions
- Group sessions, conducted by an experienced Mindfulness facilitator
- ‘Homework’ practice to do between sessions
- Text messages sent by the research team to participants between sessions reminding them about the homework



Assessment measures

- Prior to the Mindfulness training, participants filled out a number of questionnaires:
 - Job satisfaction
 - Work burnout
 - Self-compassion
 - Compassion towards others
 - Mood
 - Rumination
 - Work task self-efficacy
- They also had a blood sample taken, to measure stress, inflammation etc
- And an EEG recording made to measure any changes in brain activity



Measures contd

- These measurements also took place immediately after the training finished and again 6 weeks later (questionnaires only) to determine if any effects were sustained
- A post-training face-to-face interview was undertaken with participants to explore perceptions of the Mindfulness training and the impact it had on their caregiving role



Does Mindfulness training increase Compassion?

- Compassion = wanting to relieve suffering
- Compassionate care has been shown to result in better patient outcomes in healthcare settings
- Preliminary statistical analyses are currently being undertaken, which will be available shortly



Lessons learned from the study

- Some of our questionnaire measures were a challenge in terms of readability, especially for those for whom English is a second language; hence we may not have accurately captured changes in perceptions, beliefs and behaviours
- Similarly, the mindfulness trainer observed the course attendees found it difficult to grasp some of the mindfulness concepts – again probably because of language difficulties
- Our qualitative interview data (yet to be formally analysed) indicates that the majority of participants did not embed Mindfulness practice into their daily routines following the end of the training course – the training course may have been too short for these practices to become habitual



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