

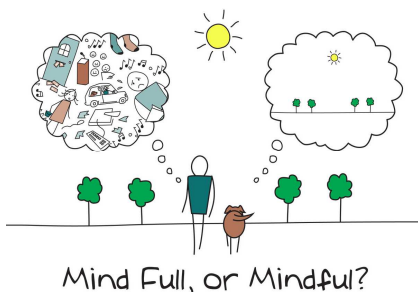
Background

Findings from a recent study¹ at the University of Manchester and St Andrews, suggested one in four medical students (26.7%) were categorised as 'burned-out.'

Mindfulness has been shown to be effective in increasing positive mental well-being and reducing anxiety and stress².

Mindfulness is defined as the moment-to-moment, non-judgemental awareness of thoughts, feelings and surrounding environment which are optimally cultivated through the practice of meditation³.

Aim: The purpose of this study was to evaluate a 5 week mindfulness intervention with first and second year undergraduate medical students from Manchester Medical School. Evaluating its affect on mental well-being, self-efficacy and burnout in



Qualitative Results

Two focus groups were conducted with 4 females and 3 males, 3 first year and 4 second year students. Four main themes emerged from the data.

Table 1: Qualitative Themes

"If I let myself slip up for one minute then I fall down, I forget things."

The experience of Pressure

"I've found myself doing a lot and feeling that need to do so."

"Quite an exciting sort of idea that we could come together and people could admit these things without shameful stigmatisation."

Explicit acceptance of emotions

"..a quiet place where you come and it is explicitly acknowledged that things are sometimes stressful."

Methods and Materials

A mixed methods approach was used.

Participants: 33 self-selected, undergraduate medical students from years 1 and 2 of the MB ChB.

Questionnaire Measures: the Maslach Burnout Inventory, the General Self-Efficacy Scale and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale.

Qualitative measures: Two semi-structured, focus groups (n = 8), analysed using framework analysis⁴.

The Intervention: The mindfulness course consisted of five weekly group sessions, each lasting one hour, which took place in the Consultation Skills Learning Centre at the medical school (picture below). Participants were also given a link to a Podcast containing three guided mindfulness exercises that they could use at home.

Data collection: Baseline measures collected prior to five-week course and again in the same week that the course ended. Analysed using Wilcoxon sign rank test.

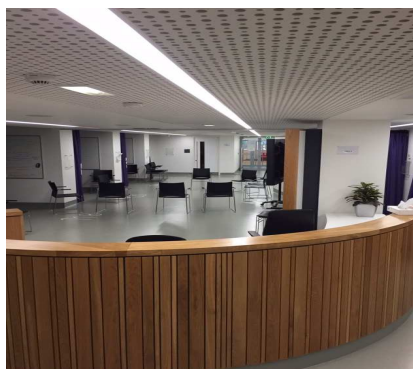


Photo: The Consultation Skills Learning Centre (CSLC)

Quantitative Results

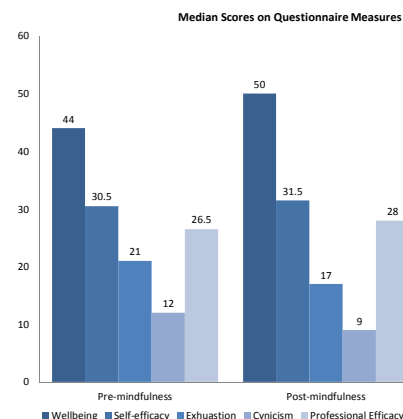


Chart 1. Measures pre/post mindfulness intervention.

Burnout:

Pre Mindfulness:

- 73% reported high levels of emotional exhaustion
- 59% reported high levels of cynicism
- 36% reported low levels of professional efficacy.
- 50% met the criteria to be considered 'burnt out'

Post Mindfulness

- 50% reported high levels of emotional exhaustion ($p = .002$)
- 27% reported high levels of cynicism ($p = .032$)
- 18% reported low levels of professional efficacy ($p = .112$)
- 4% met the criteria to be considered 'burnt out'

Well-being: Post Mindfulness significantly increased ($p = <.001$).

Self-efficacy Post Mindfulness significantly increased ($p = <.023$).

Conclusions

This study showed that a 5 week mindfulness course significantly increased self-efficacy, mental well-being and significantly lowered levels of burnout.

All measures, other than professional efficacy, had medium to large effect sizes, suggesting that not only was something learnt but that the course produced clinically significant changes.

Consistent with other studies in this area (Cecil et al., 2014; Ishak, et al., 2013) the baseline results of this study show that burnout exists in the undergraduate medical student population and that students may be at high risk of developing burnout early in their medical career.

The Future

Further mindfulness courses will be provided from 2016. 'Conversations inviting change' groups will also be run and results compared.

Contact:

Sarah Shepherd: sarah.shepherd-2@manchester.ac.uk

Claire Mimmagh: claire.mimmagh@manchester.ac.uk

References

- Cecil, J., McHale, C., Hart, J., & Laidlaw, A. (2014). Behaviour and burnout in medical students. *Medical Education Online*, 19.
- Seear, K. H., & Vella-Brodick, D. A. (2013). Efficacy of positive psychology interventions to increase well-being: Examining the role of dispositional mindfulness. *Social Indicators Research*, 114(3), 1125-1141.
- Epstein RM. Mindful practice. *JAMA* 1999;282 (9):833-9.
- Ritchie, J. and Spencer, L. (1994) 'Qualitative data analysis for applied policy Research' in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R.G. (eds) *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, London: Routledge. reprinted 2001.