UNDERSTANDING MINDFULNESS AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MEDICAL STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

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Stress and Anxiety

- **Stressful** to a level that is impacting on students’ physical and mental health.
- **Increases the likelihood of errors** and may therefore compromise the patients’ quality of care.
- **Mindfulness** practice a stress management intervention, can be cultivated by purposely paying attention to day-to-day experiences.
Methods

Questionnaires were delivered to 509 1st, 2nd and 3rd year Medical students

Analysis:
1. How many students are currently employing Mindfulness
2. Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient and qualitative content analysis with p<0.05 considered to be statistically significant
3. Qualitative analysis of the most common stressors
More than 50% of the total number of respondents don’t employ mindfulness or “rarely” employ Mindfulness.

There is a very small proportion of students that “always” employ mindfulness, only 5% of students in year 1 and 3% of students in both year 2 and 3.
Spearman Rank Correlation

There was a statistically significant relationship (p < 0.0001) and a weak positive correlation (r value of 0.2995) between students that employed mindfulness and their ability to focus on the present moment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient between</th>
<th>r value</th>
<th>95% Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>P value (two tailed)</th>
<th>Statistically significant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do you currently employ mindfulness AND Ability to focus on the present moment</td>
<td>0.2995</td>
<td>0.1701 to 0.4137</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you currently employ mindfulness AND Tend to cope well with stress in the last month</td>
<td>0.2428</td>
<td>0.1161 to 0.3617</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much do you currently employ mindfulness AND Ability to cope with anxiety, worry in the past month</td>
<td>0.2468</td>
<td>0.1224 to 0.3672</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to focus on the present moment AND Tend to cope well with stress in the last month</td>
<td>0.2791</td>
<td>0.1544 to 0.3951</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to focus on the present moment AND Ability to cope with anxiety, worry in the past month</td>
<td>0.2461</td>
<td>0.1217 to 0.3666</td>
<td>0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to cope well with stress in the last month AND Ability to cope with anxiety, worry in the past month</td>
<td>0.5411</td>
<td>0.4419 to 0.6372</td>
<td>&lt;0.0001</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was statistically significant relationship (p 0.0001) and a weak positive correlation (r value of 0.2428) between how much medical students employ mindfulness and stress levels.
Qualitative analysis

Reflection on the common stressors presented by medical students:

Workload
“Anxious that I am not competent enough to do this course”

Moving to University
“homesickness”
“lack of social support”

Personal relationships
“My grandpa got admitted to the hospital”
Interpretation of our findings

- Less than 5% of students “always” employed mindfulness across the three years of medical school.

- The Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient was statistically significant for questions regarding mindfulness, stress and anxiety. Students who were more mindful reported a greater ability to focus in the present moment and to cope with stress and anxiety.

- Year 1 - Personal relationships; Year 2 and 3 - Workload

- Overall, our findings confirm that mindfulness practice has a positive impact on University of Nottingham medical students.
Reflection

Inclusion of medical students in years 4 and 5 would have been valuable, due to their exposure to different forms of stress in their clinical years.

With distribution of questionnaires taking place during timetabled lectures, absent students did not participate.

The reliance of self-reported measures on subjective perceptions of stress and recall bias is a limitation, thus objective measures including measuring physiological changes arising from stress should be considered.

- RELEVANCE
- CHANGE
- “BIG PICTURE”
Thank you for your time

Any Questions?