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POSTER

THE RURAL CLINICAL SCHOOL OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA MINDFULNESS PROJECT

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BACKGROUND

Medical students experience high levels of stress during their training. Literature suggests that mindfulness can reduce stress and increase self-compassion levels in medical students. Most mindfulness training programs are delivered face-to-face and require significant time commitments, which can be difficult to achieve for rurally-based students with heavy academic workloads.

AIM

We sought to determine the feasibility and effectiveness of a mindfulness training program delivered online to medical students at a Rural Clinical School.

METHODS

An 8-week online training program was delivered to third year medical students at the Rural Clinical School of Western Australia in 2016. Using quantitative-qualitative mixed-methods approach, we measured the frequency and duration of the participants' mindfulness meditation practice, and assessed changes in their perceived stress, self-compassion and compassion levels, as well as personal and professional attitudes and behaviours.

RESULTS

47 students were recruited to the study. 50% of participants were practising at least weekly by the end of the 8-week program, and 32% of responding students reported practising at least weekly 6 months following the intervention. There was a statistically significant reduction in participants' perceived stress levels and a significant increase in self-compassion at 6 month follow up. Participants reported qualitative insights about the personal and professional impact of mindfulness meditation training as well as barriers to practice. ■