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MINDFULNESS-BASED SELF-CARE EDUCATION FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS IN JAPAN

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BACKGROUND

Recent studies have consistently shown that medical students experience a high rate of psychological symptoms. In this situation, teaching mindfulness in medical school has the potential to prevent student burnout. However, there are few consistent educational programs in medical schools throughout Japan.

METHOD

Since 2015, Showa University (Tokyo) has practiced an intensive self-care program based on mindfulness for 600 first-year healthcare professional students in the schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, and rehabilitation. The target objectives of this program were as follows: understand the needs of self-care, enhance self-awareness, evaluate evidence of mindfulness for mental diseases, and practice formal/informal mindfulness-based activities. This program consisted of a 90-minute lecture, followed by consecutive reflective activities, including completing personal journals and portfolios. The students were required to plan how to make use of what they learned in this course. The students were asked to complete a questionnaire upon completion of the course.

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RESULTS

The questionnaire indicated that more than 90% of the students were satisfied with the program, and about 25% started regular mindfulness-based practices such as meditation and breathing methods aimed to reduce test anxiety. Descriptions from the e-portfolio showed that the participants understood evitable stressors and the importance of the body-mind relationship.

CONCLUSION

Mindfulness-based self-care education can encourage healthcare students to understand the necessity of self-care during the early stages of their professional training. This program for the first year students will be followed by a course on Professionalism for healthcare professional students during their subsequent years of university education. ■