

# USING MINDFULNESS TO DECREASE STRESS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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## Significance of the Problem

- More than 40 million adults have an anxiety disorder
  - First episode experienced by the age of 22 (Anxiety and Depression Association of America [ADAA] 2015)
- 65.7% of students report experiencing overwhelming anxiety (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2019)

## PICOT Question

- In health care college students (P), what is the effect of mindfulness exercise (I) on their perceived stress scores post-intervention (O) compared to their pre-intervention perceived stress scores (C) over an 8-week period (T)

## Review of the Literature

<sup>a</sup>Johns Hopkins; <sup>b</sup>Johns Hopkins

Evidence	Database/Source	LOE/Quality
Daya & Hearn (2018)	MEDLINE with Full Text	II <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
Gonzalez-Valero et al. (2019)	MEDLINE with Full Text	II <sup>a</sup> , A <sup>b</sup>
Gutman et al. (2020)	CINAHL	III <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
He et al. (2018)	MEDLINE with Full Text	III <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
Kemper et al. (2015)	MEDLINE with Full Text	II <sup>a</sup> , A <sup>b</sup>
Lo et al. (2017)	MEDLINE with Full Text	II <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
McConville et al. (2017)	CINAHL	II <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
O'Driscoll et al. (2017)	CINAHL	II <sup>a</sup> , B <sup>b</sup>
Rayan (2019)	CINHAL	I <sup>a</sup> , A <sup>b</sup>
Yang et al. (2018)	Citation Chased	I <sup>a</sup> , A <sup>b</sup>
Yusufov et al (2019)	PsycINFO	II <sup>a</sup> , A <sup>b</sup>

## Best Practice

- A combination of mindfulness exercises guided by mindfulness-based stress reduction (MSBR) program in person or via online mobile applications, or audio guided CD/DVDs with self-guided practice at home with a duration of 8 weeks

## Implementation

- Participants:  $N = 56$  undergraduate health care students
- Intervention: 3-to-10-minute audiovisual mindfulness activities provided prior to start of class for a period of eight weeks. Students encouraged to use and track via Google® sheet additional usage of guided audio meditations outside of classroom
- Time and Outcome: Cohen's (1994) Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) completed at baseline and at the end of the 8-week intervention

## Evaluation

- **Primary outcome:** Modest reduction in pre-PSS score  $M = 20.23$  ( $SD = 5.74$ ) to post-PSS score  $18.70$  ( $SD = 6.48$ ); ( $t = 1.743$ ,  $p = 0.089$ )
- Statistically significant improvement in scores were noted on the PSS-10 scale item that assessed how often students felt nervous and stressed  $M = 3.33$  vs  $M = 2.93$ , ( $t = 2.716$ ,  $p = .010$ )
- **Secondary Outcome:** PSS-10 scores based on the total days of mindfulness exercise intervention participation showed non-significant ( $p = .085$ ) results
- Post-intervention total PSS-10 scores were assessed for efficacy within specific demographic variables noting minor differences that were non-significant.
- 25 of 40 participants agreed that the intervention was beneficial in decreasing their stress levels

## Conclusion and Future Implications for Practice

- Mindfulness exercise can be used to decrease perceived stress in college students
- Implications for practice: university classrooms, student health and counseling centers, freshman orientation and university events and organizations e.g., sororities, fraternities, sport teams, primary care offices, and high school programs and counseling centers
- Future research should focus on the benefit of mindfulness activities within more diverse populations