Improving Mental Wellness in Clinical Staff:
Use of Respite Rooms and Mindfulness Strategies in Ambulatory Care Settings

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Background

- Poor physical and mental wellness among clinical staff can lead to negative patient health outcomes and high turnover rates.
- Organizations that encourage employees to practice self-care during the workday have higher retention rates.
- Mindfulness practices in designated quiet spaces have been shown to benefit the overall health of healthcare workers in acute care settings.
- There is a lack of research on the use of mindfulness strategies and respite rooms in ambulatory care settings.

Objectives

This project implemented a respite room with mindfulness strategies in an ambulatory care practice to improve clinical staff's self-reported ratings of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and intent to leave their job.

Aim #1: Decrease compassion fatigue among clinical staff in an ambulatory practice 8 weeks after utilizing the respite room compared to baseline.

Aim #2: Improve compassion satisfaction among clinical staff 8 weeks after using a respite room compared with baseline.

Aim #3: Improve the anticipated turnover of clinical staff 8 weeks after using a respite room compared with baseline.

Aim #4: Describe the percentage of participants with different roles who use the respite room.

Aim #5: Describe the participant's use of the respite room and mindfulness tools

Methods

Design:
- Quality improvement project
- Pre and post intervention survey to determine improvement of compassion satisfaction, compassion fatigue, and anticipated turnover of clinical staff

Setting:
- A large primary care practice in Northern Virginia

Participants:
- Convenience sample of nurses and medical assistants working at the practice

Data Collection:
- **Tools**: Professional Quality of Life-V, Anticipated Turnover Scale, and a questionnaire of respite room use and mindfulness tools utilization
- **Timing**: Surveys were collected before and eight weeks after implementation
- **Surveys Collected**: Total of 24 pre-surveys and 22 post-surveys were analyzed

Intervention:
An office space was transformed into a sacred space providing a sanctuary to decompress, restore, and revitalize with access to various mindfulness tools.


Results

- Significantly lower burnout scores of all participants after implementation of the room (t (45)= 1.858, p=.035)
- Participants that used the room:
- Significantly lower burnout compared to those that did not use the room (t (45)=-1.407, p=.036)
- Trends showed lower means of secondary traumatic stress, compassion fatigue, and anticipated turnover
- Lower stress levels immediately after room use compared to before use (t(11)=11.00, p<0.001)
- 93% reported positive benefits immediately after room use

Benefits experienced from using the Zen Den (%)
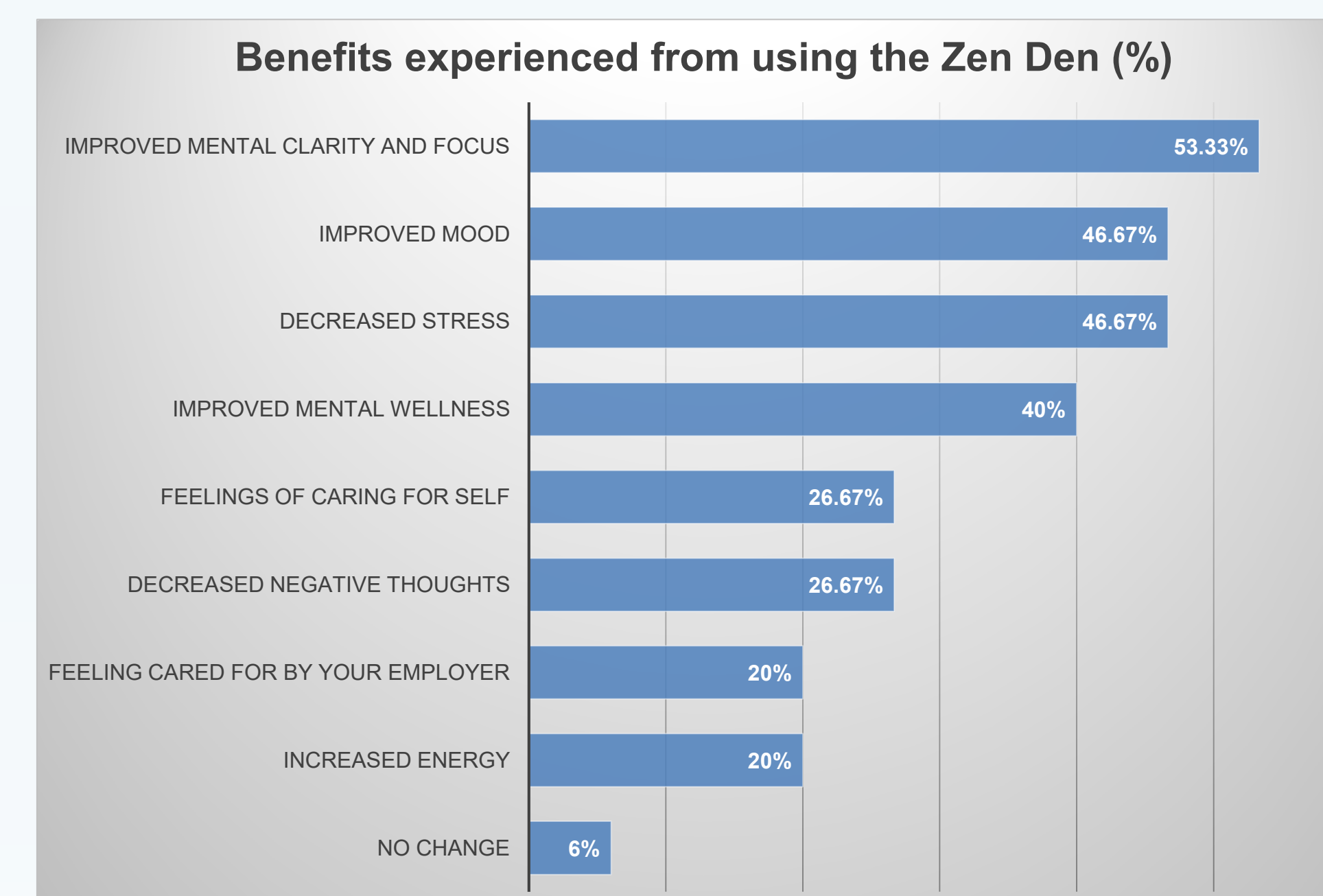
- More nurses used the room (80%) than Medical Technicians/Assistants (41.6%)
- Highest reported barrier of room use was lack of time.
- Deep breathing exercises was the most used mindfulness strategy.

Mindfulness Strategies Utilized in the Zen Den (%)
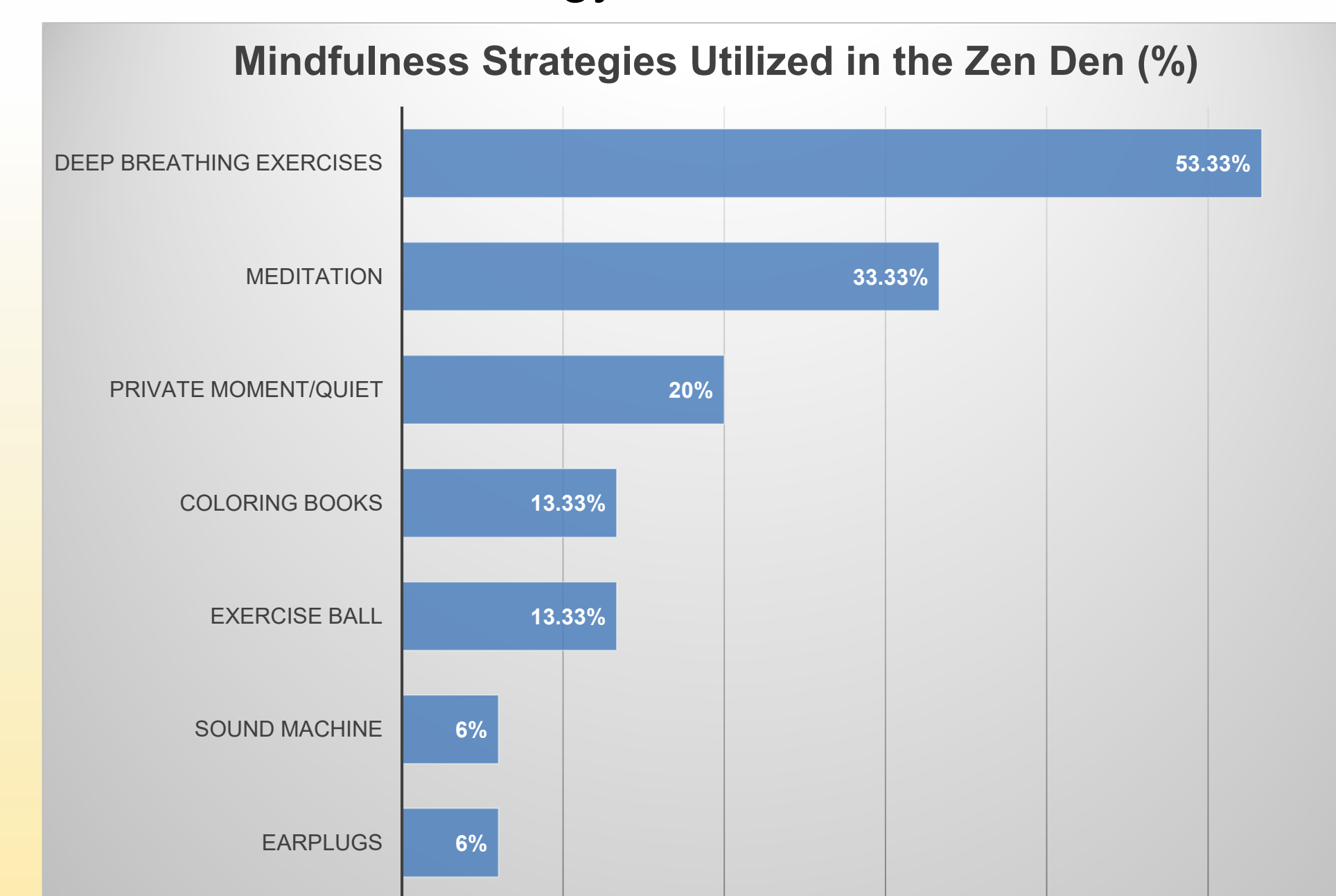
Conclusions

Findings:
- Overall positive effect on clinical staff that used the respite room during the workday including improved compassion fatigue and improved intent to stay at their job.

- Immediate mental health benefits are evident.

- Implementation of respite rooms in ambulatory settings can improve mental wellness and job satisfaction of clinical staff.

Recommendations:
- Resources to support all job roles taking self-care breaks during the workday
- Suggest scheduled visits and prioritize staffing to cover breaks
- Encourage leadership to adopt a work culture that supports and values self-care and mental wellness

Acknowledgments