

The Influence of Mindfulness-Based Chronic Pain Management courses in Ontario, Canada, on Medication Consumption, Work Return, and Productivity.

Jacqueline Gardner-Nix, Nikita Arora

St Michael's Hospital, University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada

Background and Objective: The Mindfulness-Based Chronic Pain Management course has been offered in Ontario Canada since 2002. We wished to study its influence on medication consumption, work return and productivity.

Methods: Nine hundred and two participants (age 17 to 85 years old, mean age 52.4 years; 21% male) taking a customized, trauma-informed Mindfulness-Based Chronic Pain Management (MBCPMTM) course in Ontario, Canada, during 2013/4, were asked, using pre and post questionnaires, about their medication consumption, work return and productivity as a result of taking the course. 25% received the courses on site, and 75% off site via the Ontario Telemedicine Network. 23.5% were on opioids. In our analysis we excluded health care professionals (HCPs) taking MBCPMTM courses for HCPs, and those taking 4 day versions of the MBCPMTM course, and included those taking the 13 week, one half day per week, course.

Results: Of 382 patient participants who were on medication for pain, 34% reported they were taking less medication for pain or had tapered off pain medication; 18% of 100 who were on medication for hypertension had reduced their hypertension medications; 26% of 200 on medication for anxiety had reduced their anxiety medications; 17.1% of 222 on medication for depression had reduced their depression medications, and 30% of 190 on medication for insomnia had reduced their medications for insomnia. In addition, 30% of 467 patients taking over the counter medications had reduced or stopped taking over the counter medication. Eighteen per cent of 276 patients who had been disabled from work had returned to work: 63% part time and 37% full time. In addition, 72.8% of 493 patients reported greater productivity.

Discussion and conclusions: Mindfulness training does influence economic parameters and is likely cost effective. Further research is needed to look at the influence of Mindfulness training on medication consumption, work return and productivity, and to re evaluate at long term follow up. We also recommend studying the influence of maintenance classes on continued improvements.