

Stressful or Mindful? Sustained Impact of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on Stress, Well-Being and Sick Leave for 1 Year in Patients with Work-related Stress.

Maja Schondel¹, Tine Norup¹, Esben Flachs¹, Lone Overby Fjorback²

¹*The Stressreduction Clinic, The Department of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Bispebjerg Hospital, Copenhagen, Denmark., Copenhagen, Denmark*

²*Danish Center for Mindfulness, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark*

Background and objectives:

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is an evidence based intervention shown to decrease symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression and to increase quality of life. An increasing number of patients with work-related stress are being referred from general physicians to the Department of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Bispebjerg Hospital. From October 2015 these patients were included in a stress reduction treatment; a MBSR group intervention targeting stress symptoms combined with individual counselling regarding return to work strategies.

Methods:

Patients attended a nine session MBSR group intervention lead by a trained psychologist. The MBSR program introduced mindfulness practice in the form of sitting meditation, body awareness and mindful movement. Patients furthermore received three individual counselling sessions.

Results:

103 patients were included in the treatment, and 96 patients completed (93%). Analyses examined the pattern of change on two symptom scales across time at baseline, end of treatment, three months follow-up and 1 year follow up. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) revealed significant symptom reduction from baseline to end of treatment and the reduction was maintained during the 1 year follow-up period. Likewise the Symptom Check List 90 (SCL-90) decreased significantly from baseline to end of treatment and the reduction was maintained at 1 year follow-up. The number of patients on sick leave decreased significantly from baseline to end of treatment and decreased even further at 1 year follow-up.

Conclusion:

MBSR effectively reduces self-report measures of perceived stress and symptoms of psychological distress in patients referred with work-related stress. Effects are stable for at least 1 year. Furthermore the number of patients on sick leave decreases during the 1 year-follow up period. The MBSR program is well accepted by patients.

Limitations:

The lack of control groups limits the interpretation of results, and the results do not clarify whether the improvement represents the normal course of a stress condition or whether it is the result of the MBSR intervention.