

The contribution of MBSR Program in the Italian NHS context: supporting resilience and improving coping strategies in outpatients treatment

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Background and objectives

In the clinical context distress is becoming a significant risk factor for the psychological and physical well-being as well as an important financial cost factor to the health care system. The aim of this project is to evaluate the contribution of the MBSR-Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program, in a NHS context, to face psychological distress, to improve resilience and coping strategies, and to aid the psychotherapeutic process.

Methods

Sixty (60) heterogeneous patients participated in an 8-week MBSR program. Patients suffer from anxious-depressive syndromes and adjustment disorder, several in co-morbidity of chronic physical illnesses. Participants were referred from ongoing individual psychotherapy or psychoeducational support, in the Clinical Psychology's Unit – NHS Hospital in Monza, Italy. Pre- and post-intervention changes were assessed (paired T test $p < 0.05$) by mean of outcome-evaluation (CORE-OM) and clinical profile (SCL-90 R), coping strategies (COPE-NVI), perceived stress (PSS), emotion regulation (DERS), resilience (RSA), mindful awareness (MAAS, FFMQ).

Results

We found that the MBSR program promotes a significant enhancement of awareness, as showed by an improvement in three of FFMQ subscales (acting with awareness, non-judging of inner experience, and non-reactivity to inner experience). Results also show a significant enhancement of resilience (perception of the self, planned future, social competence, family cohesion in RSA scales), of positive attitude (COPE-NVI) and emotion regulation strategies (DERS). Patients who participated to the program also showed a significant reduction in perceived stress (PSS). Data also show a significant change in the Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (CORE-om).

In addition, we observed that 41% of the 60 participants were resigned soon after the end MBSR; 20% is currently subject to occasional checks; and 38% is still under treatment.

Discussion and conclusion

In a context of Italian NHS heterogeneous outpatient population, the MBSR program, in association with individual psychotherapy or psycho-educational support, seems able to enhance awareness, resilience, emotion regulation strategies and to reduce psychological perceived distress. This pilot study has its major limitations in the absence of a control group, nonetheless the sample size is relatively numerous, particularly for a public hospital context, and results encourage further applications and studies.