

*Students' corner*

## Quo vadis students' health?

### Introducing a Mind-Body Medicine (MBM) Health Promotion-Intervention for Self-care, Sustainable Studying and Resilience in Academic Learning Life

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Academic learning life is challenging in a number of ways; current research on student health reveals enormously negative results regarding mental and physical health (Grützmacher et al., 2018). University students seem to be a particularly vulnerable group when it comes to psychological issues, such as depression, loneliness, anxiety, and stress (Hernández-Torrano et al., 2020; Bucher, 2023). The estimated prevalence of burnout among students rates as high as 56,9% (Rosales-Ricardo et al., 2021). Burnout and general reduced health lead to declined academic performance (Niemeyer, 2020) and declined academic achievement (Madigan et al., 2021). Moreover, especially medical students' burnout and reduced well-being were shown to be related to reduced empathy (Röling et al., 2020). Mental and physical well-being are major issues among physicians and were shown to have an impact on quality of patient care (Werdecker et al., 2021). Educating students in the best possible way, as well as optimal preparation for later job performance, should be seen as universities' social and moral obligations toward society (Kromydas, 2017). Especially in the field of educating future health-care specialists, fostering a culture that leads to meaningful, efficient and healthy studying should be a key component (Thye et al., 2021).

The conclusion that institutions of higher education should engage in some sort of sustainable

healthcare for their students is not far-fetched. To understand the underlying mechanisms of health-modulation, we conducted a detailed analysis of how and why students' health seems to be particularly impaired by academic life challenges. Taking into account the first-hand experiences, assembled by 12 semi-structured guided interviews, with students about their health status, we see that students feel negatively influenced by their academic schedule and its influence on their health behavior. Furthermore, students experience an impairment on their well-being due to lack of time, stress, negative exam results, and loneliness. This explorative study provides a differentiated understanding of health status, identifies previously unknown influencing factors, and uncovers individual perceptions made by students.

Following these implications, we introduced a Mind-Body Medicine (MBM) intervention (BERN-Model; Esch and Stefano, 2022) for students at Witten/Herdecke University. By addressing behavioral change, exercise, relaxation, and nutrition, we try to foster self-care, health promotion, and resilience in academic learning life. Preliminary qualitative analysis of 17 participants' evaluations and reflections on personal development reveal profound satisfaction among students with the eight-week intervention. Especially the dimension of relaxation, knowledge about the interaction of mind and

body seem to improve students' well-being. A sense of interconnectedness developed through-

out the course in peer-to-peer chats seems to be a helpful remedy against loneliness.

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