

Editorial

Highlights from the International Scientific Conference on Mind-Body Medicine

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In this edition, we are pleased to present the abstracts of the conference presenters from the inaugural International Scientific Conference on Mind-Body Medicine (ISC-MBM), held on November 4th and 5th, 2024. This hybrid event took place both in Witten, Germany, and online. Organized by the Institute for Integrative Health Care and Health Promotion at Witten/Herdecke University and the Mind-Body Medicine Research Council (MBMRC) under the leadership of Tobias Esch, the conference aimed to unite researchers and practitioners worldwide to share cutting-edge research, showcase interventions, foster collaborations, and network. The event was generously funded by the Rothenfußer Academy, the Eden Foundation, and the Identity Foundation. These organizations are committed to promoting integrative health approaches, including meditation, nature-based methods, and both traditional and modern lifestyle interventions to enhance well-being.

Event Highlights

The conference welcomed 95 participants, 65 attending on-site and 30 joining online. A total of 30 researchers presented their latest findings, including two keynote speakers: George Stefano, who discussed the role of mitochondria, and Sara Lazar, who explored pain, fear, and the impact of mindfulness. In addition, the program featured 14 oral presentations, 14 poster presentations, and a panel discussion on digital mind-body medicine.

Attendees received certificates of participation, and medical professionals earned continuing education credits. Abstracts from nearly all presenters are included in this issue, alongside a commentary on key topics and the transcript of the panel discussion.

Feedback and Participation

The general feedback during the event was overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the atmosphere as both delightful and thought-provoking. While minor technical challenges arose at the start, the event soon ran smoothly. As this was the first of its kind, the organizing team conducted a feedback survey to understand participants' experiences and expectations for future events.

The survey, accessible via QR code and email, remained open for 21 days following the conference, with a reminder sent four days before closing. A total of 25 participants responded, including 10 on-site attendees, 14 online attendees, and one who participated in both formats. Approximately 75% of respondents had prior experience with hybrid conferences. Almost all rated their expectations as being met in a good, excellent, or ideal manner, with on-site participants reporting slightly higher satisfaction (mean: 5.6 on a 7-point Likert scale) compared to online participants (mean: 5.2).

Networking and Future Recommendations

Given one of the conference's goals was fostering collaborations, participants were

asked about their networking experiences. While nearly half of the online attendees reported no private interactions, the majority had between 5 and 10 private chats. All but one respondent expressed a desire for the conference to become a regular event. Online attendees favored biannual occurrences, while on-site participants preferred an annual schedule. Three-quarters of respondents supported continuing the hybrid format, and half of the respondents were likely to very likely to recommend the conference to colleagues and peers.

Insights from Open Feedback

Open-ended responses provided valuable insights. Online attendees appreciated the low-cost format, which made participation accessible, and praised the availability of

session recordings and poster presentations on a password-protected homepage. On-site participants commended the welcoming atmosphere and helpful staff. Both groups suggested improvements, such as refining the technical components and providing more timely information about the final program and speaker schedules.

Conclusion

The inaugural International Scientific Conference on Mind-Body Medicine was a resounding success, setting a strong foundation for future events. We thank all participants, organizers, and sponsors for their contributions and look forward to building on this momentum to create even more impactful gatherings in the years to come.