

Abstract

Self-care Strategies for Medical Students: an Uncontrolled Mixed-methods Evaluation of a Mind-Body Medicine Group Course

by Raphael Scullion¹, Katja Icke¹, Tatjana Tissen-Diabaté¹, Daniela Adam¹, Miriam Ortiz¹, Claudia M. Witt^{1,2}, Benno Brinkhaus¹ and Barbara Stöckigt¹

¹Institute of Social Medicine, Epidemiology and Health Economics, Charité Universitätsmedizin Berlin

²Institute for Complementary and Integrative Medicine, University of Zurich

doi: [10.61936/themind/202412127](https://doi.org/10.61936/themind/202412127)

Background: The high stress of medical education and its detrimental effects on students' health have been well documented. As a response, a variety of stress reduction and resilience interventions have been created, among these the Mind-Body-Medicine (MBM) course of the Georgetown University, which has been established at the Charite-Universitätsmedizin since 2012. The aim of this exploratory mixed methods evaluation study was to investigate the effects of these MBM student group courses.

Methods: From 2012 to 2019 quantitative and qualitative data were gathered from 10-week MBM courses. Variables were perceived stress (PSS), mindfulness (FFA/MAAS), self-reflection (GRAS), self-efficacy (GSE), empathy (SPF) and health-based quality of life (SF-12), evaluated pre and post course attendance. Qualitative data were gathered in semi-structured interviews of focus groups at the end of each course.

Results: A total of 112 participants from 14 courses between 2012 and 2019 were included.

Participants experienced decreases of perceived stress (PSS), increased mindfulness (FFA/MAAS), self-efficacy (GSE), self-reflection (GRAS) and empathy (SPF subscales “perspective taking” and “personal distress”). In focus groups students reported increases in their ability to self-regulate stressful experiences, improved relationships towards themselves and others, as well as new insights on medicine, self- and patient care. Triangulation of both methods ground these effects of MBM practice in the social context in which they were offered as an interdependent dynamic between mindfulness and empathy, and experiences of self and other.

Conclusion: A Charité MBM course has shown beneficial effects to reduce perceived negative stress, increase self-awareness, mindfulness and empathy as well as promote integrative concepts of doctor-patient relationship. Further research including RCT trials are needed to validate the benefits of MBM courses for medical students in a larger study population

Keywords: Mind-Body Medicine, Stress reduction, Mindfulness, Resilience