Mindfulness and Prevention in Western Medicine: Focus on Physician Assistant

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Table of Contents

• History, Definitions, and Practicing Mindfulness
• Stress
• Chronic Pain
• Overview of PA Profession
• Challenges in PA Profession
• Prevention Model
Why I Chose This

- Eastern practices often get overlooked
- Help individuals live fuller, happier, healthier lives
- As a PA I want to integrate this into my practice
Mindfulness History

• Eastern culture has recognized the importance of the mind and body connection for thousands of years

• Renaissance and Enlightenment eras

• The 20th century

• Thich Nhat Hanh
  • “through mindfulness we can learn to live happily in the present moment- the only way to truly develop peace, both in one's self and in the world”

• Jon Kabat-Zinn
  • Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society
  • Stress Reduction Clinic
  • MBSR
“Mindfulness is a simple concept in which one pays attention on purpose, in the present moment, nonjudgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2014, p. 4).

Attentiveness, curiosity, presence, and the ability to adopt multiple perspectives. All these qualities promote greater awareness of self and others (Beach et al).

Noticing what is happening in our body, our thoughts, our emotions, as well as the world around us (Halliwell, 2012).

Involves an elemental and spontaneous openness to experiences, grounded in the body, in the timeless, in not expecting anything to happen, a befriending of this present moment for its own sake (Goldstein, 2010).
Practicing Mindfulness

- Process: mindful practice
  - Intention
    - Setting an intention for the day reminds you why you are practicing in the first place
  - Attention
    - Observing moment-to-moment experiences
  - Attitude
    - Keep certain attitudes in mind while practicing mindfulness such as acceptance, openness, caring, curiosity, patience, or compassion.

- Outcome: mindful awareness
Practicing Mindfulness

- Mindful breathing, listening, eating, walking, etc.
- Mindfulness Meditation and yoga
- Avoiding past-future thinking
- As awareness increases through practicing mindfulness, we notice how we become stuck on autopilot
Healthcare Statistics

- The majority of healthcare costs can be attributed to preventable chronic diseases (APHA)
- Annual healthcare costs in the US are above $320 billion (Greenwell, 2015)
- Seven in ten deaths in the US are related to preventable diseases and three quarters of healthcare dollars are spent on treating the diseases (APHA)
- Only 3 cents of each dollar spent on healthcare go toward prevention (APHA)
Stress

- High stress society
- Accumulation of minor stress
  - Headache, insomnia, GI upset
- Long term stress leads to chronic disease
  - Cancer, heart disease, dementia
Stress Reaction

- Stress
  - Stress Reaction
    - Maladaptive Coping
      - Smoking
      - Drinking
    - Anxiety, Depression
  - Activated Sympathetic Nervous System
    - Chronic Disease if Prolonged

Stress Response

- Stress Response
  - Regulate Emotions
  - Awareness

- Practice Mindfulness

- Activate Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Eliminates Accumulation of Stress
Chronic Pain

- MBSR
- Decrease in pharmaceuticals that were normally taken for pain
- Significant reduction in present-moment pain, negative body image, anxiety, depression, mood disturbance, and inhibition of activity by pain
Overview of PA Profession

- Nationally certified and state licensed
- Mid-level providers that work underneath physicians
- Educated and trained in 2-3 year program
- Complete over 2,000 hours of clinical rotations in several areas of medicine
PA Challenges to Incorporating Prevention

- Lack of time
- Lack of training
- Lack of patient interest
- Inadequate reimbursement
- Characteristics of the physician including age, specialization, their own health habits
- Pessimism of clinicians towards patients ability to change
Mindfulness and Pessimistic Clinicians

• Studies show that if doctors take preventative medicine more seriously they can double the number of patients who change their habits at the end of the year (Diclemente, Norcross, & Prochaska, 2006)

• Mindfulness can help reduce pessimism and increase positive thoughts and emotions

• Experienced Tibetan monks to employees at a high tech company
Mindfulness Reducing Burnout

- More focused, more empathetic, and less exhausted
- Make less errors and improve quality of care to patients
- Effective and efficient appointments
- Decreased levels of burnout, anxiety, depression, when compared to other doctors
- Significant improvement in quality of life and increased personal accomplishment
- Maintained over an additional nine months
Prevention Model and Implementation for PA’s

• Incentives given to PA’s that refer patients to Wellness Coaches, as well as seeing one themselves

• Lack of time barrier and inadequate reimbursement
Implementation Continued

• Continuing medical education - requiring or incorporating a class/program on:
  • Integrative health
  • MBSR training

• Educating patients on MBSR and offering MBSR as additional treatment

• Lack of training barrier
Implementation Continued

• Integration of western and eastern professions in the same health office
Incorporating self-care and mindfulness into the program while becoming a PA or through training in the hiring process.
Improved Quality of Life and Successful Preventative Change

Physician Assistants
- Stress
- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Mindfulness

Patients
- Chronic Stress
- Mindfulness
- Chronic Pain
- Chronic Diseases
Questions?
Thank You!

• Special Thank You to:
  • Michele McGrady & Lori Gray
References


- Greenwell, C. (2015, April 29). Heart Disease and Stroke Cost America Nearly $1 Billion a Day in Medical Costs, Lost Productivity. CDC Foundation.
References


