

Effects of Mindfulness Practice on Clinician Burnout: A Scoping Review

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Abstract : Background: Clinician burnout is a growing phenomenon in current health systems worldwide. Increasing emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment threaten the effective delivery of healthcare. This can potentially be mitigated by mindfulness practice, which has shown promising results in reducing burnout, restoring compassion, and preventing moral injury in clinicians. Objectives: To conduct a scoping review and identify high-quality studies on mindfulness practice in clinician burnout, synthesize themes that emerge from these studies, and discuss the implications of the results to healthcare leadership and innovation. Methodology: A focused scoping review was carried out to investigate the effects of mindfulness practice on clinician burnout. High-ranking journals were targeted to analyse high-quality studies and synthesize common themes in the literature. Studies conducted on current, practicing physicians were included. Mindfulness practice of varying forms was the main intervention studied. Grey literature and studies conducted only on allied health personnel were excluded from this review. Analysis: 31 studies were included in this scoping review. Mindfulness practice was found to decrease emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation while improving mood, responses to stress, and vigour. Self-awareness, compassion, and empathy were also increased in study participants. From this review, four themes emerged which include: innovations in mindfulness practice, mindfulness and positive psychology, the impact of mindfulness on work and patient care, and barriers and facilitators to clinician mindfulness practice. Conclusion: Mindfulness had widely been reported to benefit mental health and well-being, but the studies reviewed seemed to adopt a mono focus and omitted key considerations to healthcare leadership, systems-level culture, and practices. Mindfulness practice is a quintessential component of positive psychology and is inherently linked to effective leadership. A mindful and compassionate clinician leader will play a crucial role in addressing gaps in current practice, prioritise staff mental health, and provide a supportive platform for innovation.

Keywords : mindfulness practice, clinician burnout, healthcare leadership, COVID-19

Conference Title : ICMTTP 2022 : International Conference on Mindfulness: Theory and Practice

Conference Location : Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Conference Dates : February 15-16, 2022