

Mindfulness just as effective as CBT for a broad range of psychiatric symptoms

April 13 2017



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Mindfulness group therapy has an equally positive effect as individual CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) for the treatment of a wide range of psychiatric symptoms in patients with depression, anxiety and stress-

related disorders. Researchers made the finding in a new study from the Center for Primary Healthcare Research (CPF) in Malmö, which is a collaboration between Lund University in Sweden and Region Skåne.

The need for psychotherapy in primary healthcare is on the increase for patients who are suffering with a variety of [mental health problems](#). However, individual [therapy](#) is costly and the supply does not meet the demand. Group therapy with mindfulness can be a viable alternative treatment, which at the same will free up resources in healthcare to be used more efficiently.

"Our new research shows that mindfulness group therapy has the equivalent effect as individual CBT for a wide range of psychiatric symptoms that are common among this patient group," says Professor Jan Sundquist, who led the research group in the study which has been published in *European Psychiatry*.

He adds, "We have shown in a previous study that mindfulness group therapy is just as effective as individual CBT for the treatment of typical depression and anxiety symptoms; something we also observed in the new study."

The study group included 215 patients with depression, anxiety and stress-related disorders. Patients were recruited from 16 different healthcare centres across Scania in southern Sweden for the eight-week randomised controlled trial. Researchers studied a broad range of [psychiatric symptoms](#) (measured by several types of questionnaires, e.g. Symptom Checklist-90, SCL-90) and how these symptoms changed during the treatment, either with mindfulness in group therapy or individual CBT.

The results showed that the average score for all 15 different subscales/indexes in the various questionnaires decreased significantly in

both scales. The various scales measured, among others, symptoms of depression, general anxiety, stress and somatization, obsessive-compulsive disorder, interpersonal sensitivity, aggression, phobic anxiety, paranoid ideation and psychoticism. There was no difference in treatment effect between the two groups.

"As mental illnesses are increasing at a very fast rate it is absolutely essential to expand the treatment alternatives for this patient group in [primary healthcare](#). Our view is that the scarce resources should be partly reallocated to mindfulness [group](#) therapy so that the limited availability of individual psychotherapy can be utilised in an optimal fashion," concludes Professor Sundquist.

More information: J. Sundquist et al, The effect of mindfulness group therapy on a broad range of psychiatric symptoms: A randomised controlled trial in primary health care, *European Psychiatry* (2017). [DOI: 10.1016/j.eurpsy.2017.01.328](#)

Provided by Lund University

Citation: Mindfulness just as effective as CBT for a broad range of psychiatric symptoms (2017, April 13) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-04-mindfulness-effective-cbt-broad-range.html>

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