



has looked at the psychological health benefits of adopting "mindfulness" as an intervention to help health care workers reduce their personal stress levels during a medical crisis, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Mental health issues have risen to the top of the health care agenda in recent years and were perhaps brought even closer to the fore as COVID-19 spread around the world. Those challenged with looking after the sick and dying often had little opportunity to look after themselves in between highly stressful and demanding shifts caring for critically ill patients. A diverse and international research team from centers in China, India, Indonesia, Iraq, and Thailand has looked at how mindfulness as a mental health intervention affected 600 physicians and nurses working on COVID-19 wards during 2021.

Mindfulness has its roots in various cultural traditions found in religions and holistic health practices with their roots in Asia but also emerges from cultures and practices elsewhere in the world. It might be succinctly defined as "living in the moment." This pithy state belies a much broader concept of being focused on the present, one's current environment, and the task or recreation in hand. It is generally thought of as being a tool to allow one to detach oneself from problems and worries while they are not in one's immediate periphery so that rather than dwelling on past happenings or future worries one is "mindful" of only those things that are immediate and require one's attention at the present moment.

Being mindful is not to forget or ignore any aspects of one's life, relationships, and commitments, but to find a way to not be distracted by those issues that are beyond one's control or observations at a given time. As an [intervention](#), is thought to reduce undue anxiety, stress, and tension so that the mind and body can recover from the acutely stressful times. Both mental and physical stress involve raised levels of stress

hormones in the body, often raised [blood pressure](#), and other physiological changes that can be harmful if held at high levels over prolonged periods leading to [chronic depression](#), constant anxiety, and physical harms such as heart problems.

The team found that those [health](#) care workers who were able to follow the practice of [mindfulness](#) saw greatly reduced anxiety levels, less depression, and an improvement in what is known as self-efficacy, which is the belief in one's ability to carry out a required task to the best of one's ability and to achieve particular goals.

**More information:** J. Jaenudin et al, Study of the role of mindfulness intervention based on stress reduction in psychological distress and self-efficacy among the health industry staff during COVID-19 pandemic, *International Journal of Work Organisation and Emotion* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJWOE.2022.123512](#)

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Benefits of 'mindfulness' for health care workers in a pandemic (2022, June 28)  
retrieved 30 April 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-06-benefits-mindfulness-health-workers-pandemic.html>

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