Mindfulness—a new treatment for tinnitus
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A randomized controlled trial published in the current issue of *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* discloses the effectiveness of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy as a treatment for chronic tinnitus. Tinnitus is experienced by up to 15% of the population and can lead to significant disability and distress. There is rarely a medical or surgical target and psychological therapies are recommended.

Authors investigated whether mindfulness-based cognitive therapy could offer an effective new therapy for tinnitus. This single-site randomized controlled trial compared mindfulness-based cognitive therapy to intensive relaxation training (RT) for chronic, distressing tinnitus in adults. Both treatments involved 8 weekly, 120-min sessions focused on either relaxation (RT) or mindfulness-based cognitive therapy. Assessments were completed at baseline and at treatment commencement 8 weeks later. The primary outcomes were tinnitus severity (Tinnitus Questionnaire) and psychological distress (Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation—Non-Risk, CORE-NR), 16 weeks after baseline.

A total of 75 patients were randomly allocated to mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (n = 39) or RT (n = 36). Both groups showed significant reductions in tinnitus severity and loudness, psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and disability. mindfulness-based cognitive therapy led to a significantly greater reduction in tinnitus severity than RT. Effects persisted 6 months later, with a mean difference of 7.2 (95% CI 2.1-2.3, p = 0.006) and a standardized effect size of 0.56 (95% CI 0.16-0.96). Treatment was effective regardless of initial tinnitus severity, duration, or hearing loss.

These findings show that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is effective in reducing tinnitus severity in chronic tinnitus patients compared to intensive RT. It also reduces psychological distress and disability. Future studies should explore the generalizability of this approach and how outcome relates to different aspects of the intervention.


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