Experiences of Pre-Licensure & Post-Licensure Nurses Participating in Mindfulness Training: A Qualitative Study

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Background

- The current healthcare environment burdens nurses with multiple demands on and of their attention, often leading to multi-tasking.
- Providers who are unfocused, and incompletely attentive, have greater numbers of incorrect diagnoses, commit more medical errors, and participate in more unprincipled behaviors; all which contribute to poorer patient outcomes (Epstein, 1999; Ludwig & Kabat-Zinn, 2008; Riskin, 2009; Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010; Sibinga & Wu, 2010).
- Mindfulness practice has been shown to increase awareness. Improve empathy, listening skills, and to decrease burnout, (Krasner, Epstein, Beckman, & et al 2009).
- Mindfulness is a state of paying attention in a non-judgmental way with an awareness of the present experience in an effort to develop clearer thinking. Few nursing schools or hospitals offer mindfulness training to their nurses.
- This study aimed to explore the experiences of pre and post licensure nurses who took part in mindfulness training.

Methods

- Following IRB approval, potential participants were recruited from a School of Nursing in the South Eastern United States to participate in an 8 week mindfulness training program.
- A mindfulness training program was developed by the PIs and a mindfulness expert that included recorded sessions. Each session was facilitated by trained faculty and consisted of education on mindfulness, guided practice, and discussions around participants’ feelings during practices. Sessions were held several times during the week in a classroom, lasted less than 1 hour.
- Participants were provided with journals to record their thoughts, feelings, and emotions along with their answers to prompted reflective questions as they journeyed through the multi week study. The journal entries served as the qualitative data source.
- A qualitative descriptive approach was used to describe the experience of participants.

Results

- A total of 27 participants completed the qualitative portion of the study.
- A key theme identified was overcoming the challenges of mindfulness practice.
- The key concepts that emerged from the data collected from the journals were feelings of relaxation and calmness following and during practice.
- Longitudinally as the weeks progressed, a trend in the participants’ awareness of their mind wandering and their improved ability to refocus was also found.
- Participants were asked to describe what they learned about themselves and others throughout the training. The main findings included reporting:
  - ‘Living more in the moment’
  - ‘They felt less likely to overreact’
  - ‘Improvements in being able to stay calm in stressful situations.’

Discussion

- Findings indicate a need for mindfulness training in the nursing field. This study illuminated the benefits of a mindfulness practice. Participants articulated improvements in their ability to stay in the moment, react to stressful situations in a more thoughtful and calm way, and a decrease in tendencies to overreact.
- These realized improvements of attention to the moment, control of emotions, and stress coping may lead to healthier and more mindful provider – patient interactions, improvements in patient safety, and better patient outcomes.
- These findings provide evidence to support offering mindfulness training in academic and clinical settings. The key in offering this training will be to provide time, space, and support to bolster the changes that sustained efforts, and commitments to practice can be maximized.

Quotes

"I find myself spending time trying to analyze, instead reacting to a person or circumstance...”

"The mindfulness training gets me to take a second and think about my response. It helps me to look at the big picture instead of the minor details of a situation.”

"I had more chances to practice mindfulness at the hospital. I tried the 3 minute breathing space practice and also the informal handwashing practice during the day. It helped me stay calm and focused.”

References


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