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Mindfulness based interventions for caregivers of patients with dementia: A review

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Introduction: Caregivers of patients with dementia often face challenges and difficulties associated with behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia. Family members often provide the majority of care for those with Alzheimer's disease and other age-related problems. Studies have shown that about one-third of caregivers of patients with dementia experience a major depressive episode and 5– 10% have symptoms consistent with an anxiety disorder. There is emerging evidence that mindfulness-based interventions may be useful for these caregivers and may mitigate some of the negative effects related to care giving.

Aims: This review aims to look at mindfulness-based interventions which may be beneficial for caregivers of patients with dementia.

Methods: A literature search was performed to look for existing literature on mindfulness-based interventions for caregivers of patients with dementia.

Results: A review of the literature had mixed findings. Mindfulness based stress reduction may be beneficial in reducing depressive symptoms and anxiety symptoms in caregivers of patients with dementia, although the effects were not apparent in some studies after some time had lapsed after the intervention. Caregiver burden and perceived stress was shown to improve in some studies but had no effect on other studies.

Conclusion: While there is emerging evidence that mindfulness-based interventions may be effective for caregivers of patients with dementia, it is difficult to determine the specific elements of mindfulness-based interventions that are efficacious in mitigating the negative effects related to caregiving, has the heterogeneous nature of studies performed. Cultural factors may also play a role in the efficacy of such interventions. Future research should emphasize on larger scale studies with more robust methodology.

Recent Publications:

1. Hurley R V C, Patterson T G and Cooley S J (2014) Meditation-based interventions for family caregivers of people with dementia: a review of the empirical literature. *Aging and Mental Health* 18(3):281–288.
2. Whitebird R R, Kreitzer M, Crain A L, Lewis B A, Hanson L R, et al. (2013) Mindfulness-based stress reduction for family caregivers: a randomized controlled trial. *Gerontologist* 53(4):676–86.
3. Lavretsky H, Epel E S, Siddarth P, Nazarian N, Khalsa D S, et al. (2013) A pilot study of yogic meditation for family dementia caregivers with depressive symptoms: effects on mental health, cognition, and telomerase activity. *International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 28(1):57–65.
4. Epstein-Lubow G P, Miller I W and Mc Bee L (2006) Mindfulness training for caregivers. *Psychiatric Services* 57(3):421–421.
5. Waelde L C, Thompson L and Gallagher-Thompson D (2004) A pilot study of a yoga and meditation intervention for dementia caregiver stress. *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 60(6):677–687

Biography

Chao Tian Tang is a Psychiatry Resident in the National Healthcare Group, Singapore. He completed his graduation from the National University of Malaysia and is currently working at the Institute of Mental Health, Singapore. He has experience working in high dependency Psychiatric Care Units, Adult Neuro Developmental Services, Geriatric Psychiatry, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and General Psychiatry Units. He is actively involved in research and clinical work. He has published articles in the field of Geriatric Psychiatry, Adult Neuro Developmental Services and Bibliometrics. He has attended and presented at conferences in fields such as Neuro Developmental Disorders and General Psychiatry. He hopes to take an integrated approach to medicine for Holistic Psychiatric Care.

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