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Views on a brief mindfulness intervention among patients with long-term illness

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Chronic illness is the leading cause of death in UK and worldwide. Psychological therapies to support self-management have been shown to play an important role in helping those with chronic illness cope; more recently, the therapeutic benefits of mindfulness approaches have become evident for managing depression and other distressing emotions. Brief guided mindfulness interventions, are more convenient than intensive traditional programs requiring regular attendance but have been less explored. This study assessed views on a brief (i.e., 10 minute) mindfulness intervention for those with specific long-term illnesses. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with chronic illness patient groups (i.e., chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic pain and cardiovascular disease), designed to capture the acceptability and feasibility of the intervention. The interviews were conducted after use of mindfulness based audio in clinic and, one week later, after use in the patient's own environment. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. In total, a combination of 18 interviews and focus groups were conducted among 14 patients. Recruitment was most successful with chronic pain patients. All patients reported benefits such as feelings of relaxation and improved coping with symptoms. While the wording and content of the audio were generally well received, it was suggested that the length could be increased, as it felt rushed, and that more guidance about the purpose of mindfulness, and when to use it, was needed. A brief mindfulness intervention was well accepted among patients with long-term illness. The intervention may benefit by being lengthened and by offering further guidance on its use.

Biography

Anastassia Howarth is currently pursuing her PhD in Behavioral Medicine, specializing in Chronic Pain Management at St. George's University of London. Her prior degree, an MSc in Health Psychology, focused on lower back pain and she has previous research experience in health outcomes research specifically with patient reported outcomes. Her most recent publication is the protocol for a pilot study of a randomized controlled trial, evaluating a brief mindfulness intervention for those with chronic pain.

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