



Does mindfulness intervention support university students' wellbeing and resilience to stress?

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ABSTRACT

Levels of stress in UK university students are high, with an increase in the proportion of students seeking help in recent years. Academic pressure is reported as a major trigger. Mindfulness training has been shown to reduce stress and is popular among students, but its effectiveness in this context needs to be ascertained. To address these issues the University of Cambridge has funded an implementation and evaluation project, led by a collaboration between the University Counselling Service, the Academic Division and the Department of Psychiatry.

In this pragmatic randomized controlled trial we hypothesized that the provision of a preventative mindfulness intervention in universities could reduce students' psychological distress during the exam period (primary outcome), improve their resilience to stress up to at least one year later, reduce their use of mental health support services, and improve academic performance. More than 600 University of Cambridge students free from active crises or severe mental illness were randomized to joining an eight-week mindfulness course or the mental health provision as usual. The study is ongoing. Fifty participants are also donating blood samples to assess the effect of mindfulness training on immune dysregulation and pro-inflammatory states in the context of exam stress.

Organizing committee

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