Title: A MINDFULNESS-BASED INTERVENTION TO REDUCE STRESS AMONG GRADUATE LEVEL PRE-LICENSURE NURSING STUDENTS

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Aims: Heavy academic demands place pre-licensure nursing students at risk for high levels of stress, which has been linked to anxiety and depression, as well as impaired learning and critical thinking. Stress reduction skills may provide critical support for these students. Mindfulness-based interventions (MBI’s) have been effective in reducing mental distress and increasing self-compassion in a variety of populations. Aims: to examine feasibility and perceived stress-related effects of a customized MBI to reduce stress in a university nursing student population.

Methods: This study evaluated the feasibility of a 14-week MBI targeting stress among beginning pre-licensure nursing students. The MBI included: 8 weekly after-class faculty-led mindfulness-training (MT) sessions (15-20 minutes each), brief daily home practice, online reflective journaling, and monthly group meetings. Web-based audio recordings supported student home practice. Weekly reflective journal entries were analyzed for themes related to study aims.

Results: 16/32 students completed the study. Reasons for attrition: being too tired, too “stressed,” or burdened by outside obligations. Thematic analysis revealed that students felt very stressed about academic performance and body image; however, all but one found the MT and journaling useful in reducing stress and improving self-compassion. Students reflected specific times when mindfulness practice helped cope with critical clinical situations.

Conclusions: Increasing access to MT in the curriculum is in progress. Future research is needed to evaluate the impact of MT on student academic and clinical performance. MT in nursing students may have long-term implications for improving quality of nursing care and reducing nurse burnout.

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