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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Intervention for the Treatment of Chronic Pain in the Elderly

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SI HS Abstract
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Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Intervention for the Treatment of Chronic Pain in the Elderly

One of the most common complaints of adults in their 80s and above, a growing portion of our population, is chronic pain and it is often inadequately treated. A secular mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program was developed by Jon Kabat-Zinn in 1979 and has since shown measurable benefits to individuals in decreasing depression, pain, and anxiety. Considering the significant risk of side effects and age-associated changes of pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics in the traditional pharmacologic approach to chronic pain in the elderly, non-pharmacologic intervention such as MBSR may be particularly effective for the elderly population.

Methods: We conducted a 6 week, 90 minutes per week MBSR program. We will measure feasibility (ability to recruit 18-20 residents). We will also measure pain intensity and interference before and after the program.

Results: A total of 21 patients participated in the MBSR for chronic pain program. The pain intensity and pain interference scores after the MBSR program decreased with statistical significance from the pre-program scores ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.01$ respectively). These scores remained significantly decreased from pre-program scores at 2 month follow up ($p < 0.001$ and $p < 0.01$ respectively).

Conclusion: These data suggests that a MBSR program for chronic pain in the elderly is a feasible and effective intervention for lowering pain intensity and interference. This small study paves the way for larger efficacy studies that may compare this intervention to other current chronic pain standards of care.