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Efficacy of Existing Interventions for Health Care Provider Stress & Implications for Low-Resource Health Care Settings: A Systematic Review

Ann Marie Kelly, MS; Patience Afulani, MBChB, MPH, PhD*

Introduction: There is a demand for interventions that may help providers cope with inevitably high levels of stress, but there is a paucity of data on the efficacy/feasibility of interventions for provider stress/burnout—particularly in low-resource settings. This study examined existing interventions and their effectiveness in combatting stress and burnout among providers.

Methods: The traditional format of a systematic review was employed utilizing PubMed, PsycInfo, and SCOPUS to examine stress and burnout interventions offered to health care providers. Primary outcomes of stress/burnout were analyzed through the use of validated resilience scores. This study initially identified 1,720 records; twelve studies were included in the final review (6 RCT, 6 Observational).

Results: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reductions (MBSR) and modified versions of MBSR proved effective in mitigating burnout among healthcare providers. Interventions involving work-hour adjustments and “Balint-type” discussion sessions demonstrated modest results with downward trends in burnout joined by a decrease in other secondary measurements like emotional exhaustion. Interventions focused on protected sleep periods, communication skills training combined with stress management, and online courses did not demonstrate statistically significant reductions in burnout or depression.

Conclusion: Some of the mindfulness-based and focused educational interventions analyzed in this review show promise in the sustainable reduction in stress/burnout among physicians and nurses. This review also supports the need for and the potential benefits of long-term follow-up measures regarding healthcare provider stress/burnout interventions in order to develop feasible

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programs that may help low-resource setting providers that experience burnout in its most extreme form.