

Mind Body Medicine Research Proposal

Background: In June, 2011, the International Association of Medical Science Educators was held in St. Petersburg, Florida. Aviad Haramati, PhD gave a plenary talk on the mind body program that he started at Georgetown University Medical School. Over the past several decades, there has been a growing body of literature which suggests that mind body approaches to health are effective tools in helping patients heal and become more self aware. During the past decade, there has also been a growing movement to bring more humanism back into medicine and medical education. Dr. Haramati developed a program to address that issue with medical students. After hearing his presentation, Dr. Coletto, along with Nancy Grotton, attended a three day intensive training to become facilitators of mind body groups for students. Over the past several years, they have noticed that OCOM students undergo a significant loss of health, empathy, and compassion during their time at our institution. Neither the students nor their patients are served by this. OCOM's mission is, "to transform health care by educating highly skilled and compassionate practitioners, providing exemplary patient care, and engaging in innovative research within a community of service and healing." Mind-body healing is essential in fulfilling this mission.

Proposal: Dr. Coletto and Nancy Grotton recently introduced a course that teaches mind-body approaches – including meditation, guided imagery, biofeedback, breathing techniques, art, music, and movement – that can alleviate stress and foster self-awareness and self-care. Ten students enrolled and were asked to complete several questionnaires that measure stress/coping, mindfulness, and the students' perception of the role of mind-body medicine in enhancing self-awareness. The questionnaires were completed before the first class and after the last class, so that the instructors could evaluate the effectiveness of the course in enhancing coping, mindfulness, and perceptions of mind-body medicine. The instructors are now seeking IRB approval to share their findings from this first course with other educators.

This course was offered to a maximum of 10 first year OCOM students. During the winter quarter, the group met for two consecutive hours on Tuesday evening beginning on January 3 for 11 weeks with Joe and Nancy, who facilitated the sessions. Participants engaged in various techniques; were given the opportunity to discuss them with members of their small group; and were encouraged to practice daily the skills taught in order to incorporate these learned skills into daily life.

Methods: Each weekly session began with a short meditation. This was followed by a check-in period where each participant discussed the life events and feelings of the past week along with any insights gained by practicing new mindfulness techniques learned during the previous week's session. Participants could decline to speak during this time. After the check-in period, a new mindfulness technique was presented and practiced. This was followed by a discussion of how that technique felt to each participant. Again, participants could decline to speak. The session was brought to a close by another short meditation. Additional recommended readings and resource material are presented.

At the onset of the first session, participants completed three surveys regarding stress and mindfulness; the Perceived Stress Scale, the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale, and a Mind-Body Medicine questionnaire. At the conclusion of the final session, participants completed the same three surveys plus one open-ended, qualitative questionnaire regarding their experience in the course and its effect on their daily lives. Scores on these questionnaires are helping us to evaluate the effectiveness of this course in helping individual students cope with stress.

This application is for a secondary analysis of these data so that we can share our experience in this course with other educators. We will enter all of the questionnaire data into a database for statistical analyses. The data have no identifying information. Only the last 4 numbers of the phone number have been used. The data are maintained in a secure office on the OCOM campus that only members of the research team can access. The raw data will be entered into a computer database for analysis, and that database is password protected so that only members of the research team can access it. We will compare before and after scores using the paired T-Test, calculate change scores on stress and mindfulness, and evaluate the potential correlation between change in mindfulness and change in coping. Qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire will be coded and recurring themes will be identified using qualitative analysis software. We plan to present our findings at a national conference and in a publication for educators.

Conclusion/Anticipated Findings: We anticipate the following benefits of this training to individual students will be observed.

- Stress reduction

- Increased self awareness

- Learning mindfulness techniques for self care

- Improved focus
- Improved learning
- Increased level of health and well being
- Better communication with classmates and others
- Learning mindfulness techniques for clinical use with patients

Information on the effectiveness of mind-body awareness obtained from this first course will be shared with other educators, adding to the data regarding the use of a mind body course in a medical school program to help students:

- Decrease stress and burn out
- Improve learning
- Live more fulfilling lives
- Communicate more effectively
- Be more effective in helping patients in a variety of clinical settings