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Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction and Chronic Illness

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Recommended Citation
Background
The Minnesota Department of Health (n.d.) defines a chronic health condition as having an extended course, does not resolve suddenly, and complete cure is rare. The literature suggests that stress can exacerbate the symptoms of chronic health condition (Roth & Roberts, 2004). Addressing the biopsychosocial needs of individuals with chronic health conditions pushes the limits of conventional medicine (Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt, & Walach, 2004). A chronic health condition, if left untreated, can lead to additional physical and psychological conditions (e.g., contributing to the development of anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation, hopelessness, and helplessness) (Ledesma & Kumari, 2009; Reibel, Giesen, Brantart, & Rosenzweig, 2001).

One way to reduce stress is through the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) a program developed to address the biopsychosocial needs of individuals with chronic health conditions by providing training in meditation and yoga as an approach to stress reduction and emotion management (Bishop, 2002). Additionally, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction is an integrative approach to decrease stress and improve quality of life (Praissman, 2008).

Methodology
A systematic review of the literature obtained from peer reviewed journals over the last 10 years was completed regarding the modifications made to the University of Massachusetts’ Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program to reduce the stress that individuals with chronic health conditions experience. Key stakeholders at the agency and the researcher identified required criteria necessary for the successful implementation of a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program at Immanuel St. Joseph’s - Mayo Health System. The criteria included programs effective in rural areas, programs addressing populations at risk, group composition group facilitators credentials, inclusion of outcomes, and chronic illnesses.

Purpose
The purpose of this research was to evaluate the modifications made to the University of Massachusetts’ Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program as found in the literature and identify alternative strategies to decrease the stress of individuals suffering from specific chronic health conditions. The findings will be presented to the agency and at the Minnesota State University, Mankato Masters of Social Work Capstone Forum.

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