

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Meditation for physical, mental and spiritual health

In recent decades mind-body medicine has been an important field in health care where physicians consider that the process of the mind has a major impact in influencing the health of the body.¹ Medical scientists have begun to realize there is an intimate link between the mind and the body. Among the various types of mind-body medicine therapy, meditation remains one of the most practised techniques and many scientific studies carried out have proven the positive effects of meditation on both mental and physical health.^{1,2}

Meditation originated in ancient India more than 3000 years ago and has subsequently been introduced all over the world across different culture and religious practice.¹

It is a supreme self-help method, using one's own power of concentration to overcome the mental hindrances and reach the tranquillity and harmony within.^{1,2} The tranquil state of the mind will bring about a quiet and peaceful mind, pure vision, love, warmth, relaxation and sensitivity to all beings. One of the famous examples of meditations is 'transcendental meditation'. Individuals report feeling refreshed both physically and psychologically following meditation and the end results are that the mind becomes more alert and calm, thinking process is smooth and clear, and the energy levels of a person are increased.^{1,2} The second type of meditation practiced is mindfulness meditation. In this type of meditation, the main function of the mind is to understand the way things are.²

In chronic pain, the patient who practices meditation will try to observe the sensation of pain, aware of

the process and sensation as a changing phenomenon. Instead of reacting with anger, frustrations or hatred towards the pain as an obstacle, one can now face the situation with a calm, composure, rational and harmonious state of mind and arrive at a solution for that problem.^{1,2}

Other health benefits from meditation includes better sleep, reduced abuse of alcohol and drugs, reduction of blood pressure, decreased in mean total cholesterol syndrome, decreased incidence of headache, backache, fibromyalgia, and improve premenstrual syndrome.¹ In the psychological aspect it improves self esteem, reduction in stress, improve cognitive function, more caring, compassionate, empathy and increasing happiness.³

Overall, meditation lead to less hospitalization and reduction of medical costs.^{1,2}

The majority of the cases seen in family practice are early presentation and the symptoms often undifferentiated. Some of these illnesses may be psychological in origin and stress related. In such instances, meditation may have a role in the management of these chronic diseases. In conclusion meditation as a form of alternative therapy can bring about physical, mental and spiritual health. Family physicians may want to carry out research in this field to study the impact of meditation on illness progress and therapy.

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