

Mindful Self-Compassion for Phase 1 Medical Learners at NOSM:

A Wellness and Resilience Initiative

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Disclosure

No conflicts.



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Background

Being a medical learner is challenging...

- Globally, 34% of medical learners experience anxiety
- North American medical learners experience substantial rates of:
 - Burnout (50%)
 - Depression/depressive symptoms (27%)
 - Suicidal ideation (11%)

...and this doesn't seem to improve once medical training is complete.

- In Canada, physicians also experience high rates of:
 - Burnout (30%)
 - Depression (34%)
 - Suicidal ideation (19%)

Rotenstein, L. S., Ramos, M. A., Torre, M., Segal, J. B., Peluso, M. J., Guille, C., ... & Mata, D. A. (2016). Prevalence of depression, depressive symptoms, and suicidal ideation among medical students: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Jama*, 316(21), 2214-2236.

Dyrbye, L. N., Thomas, M. R., Massie, F. S., Power, D. V., Eacker, A., Harper, W., et. al., (2008). Burnout and Suicidal Ideation among U.S. Medical Students. *Annals of Internal Medicine: Academia and Clinic*.

CMA National Physician Health Survey: A National Snapshot (2018). Canadian Medical Association https://www.cma.ca/sites/default/files/2018-11/nph_survey-e.pdf



Background

Why is this happening?

- Medical schools lack structural academic programming directed at improving the mental health and well-being of their learners

Schutt, A., Chretien, K. C., Woodruff, J. N., Press, V. G., Vela, M., & Lee, W. W. (2020). National Survey of Wellness Programs in US and Canadian Medical Schools. *Academic Medicine*, 96(5), 728-735.



Background

What academic programming would learners benefit from?

- Medical learners could benefit from self-compassion skills training
 - Self-compassion skills training has been shown to increase self-compassion and well-being, and decrease stress and burnout among health care workers in a hospital setting^{4,5}
 - Self-compassion is associated with resilience and optimism, and reductions in perfectionism⁶, depression and anxiety^{7,8} in university students

Neff, K., Knox, M., Long, P., Gregory, K. (In Press). Caring for others without losing yourself: An Adaptation of the Mindful Self-Compassion Program for Healthcare Communities. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*.

Germer, C., & Neff, K. (2019). *Teaching the mindful self-compassion program: A guide for professionals*. Guilford Publications.

Ergün-Başak, B., & Can, G. (2018). The Relationships Between Self-Compassion, Social-Connectedness, Optimism and Psychological Resilience Among Low-Income University Students. *Ilkogretim Online*, 17(2).

Ferrari, M., Yap, K., Scott, N., Einstein, D. A., & Ciarrochi, J. (2018).. Self compassion moderates the perfectionism and depression link in both adolescence and adulthood. *PLOS Online Publication*.10.1371/journal.pone.0192022

Frostadottir, A. D., & Dorjee, D. (2019). Effects of mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and compassion focused therapy (CFT) on symptom change, mindfulness, self-compassion, and rumination in clients with depression, anxiety, and stress. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10, 1099.

Background

Self-compassion: being open to and moved by one's own suffering, experiencing feelings of caring and kindness toward oneself, taking an understanding, non-judgmental attitude toward one's inadequacies and failures, and recognizing that one's experience is part of the common human experience.



Neff, K. D. (2003). The development and validation of a scale to measure self-compassion. *Self and identity*, 2(3), 223-250.

Objective



Administer the 6-week Self-Compassion for Healthcare Communities (SCHC) course to Phase 1 (Year 1&2) learners at NOSM on a voluntary basis to determine if participation improves resilience, life satisfaction, mindfulness, compassion, self-compassion, and reduces feelings of stress, depression, anxiety and burnout.

Methods

Recruitment

- Phase 1 medical learners at NOSM recruited on a voluntary basis

Intervention

- Learners participated in a 6-week virtual SCHC course

Quantitative Measures

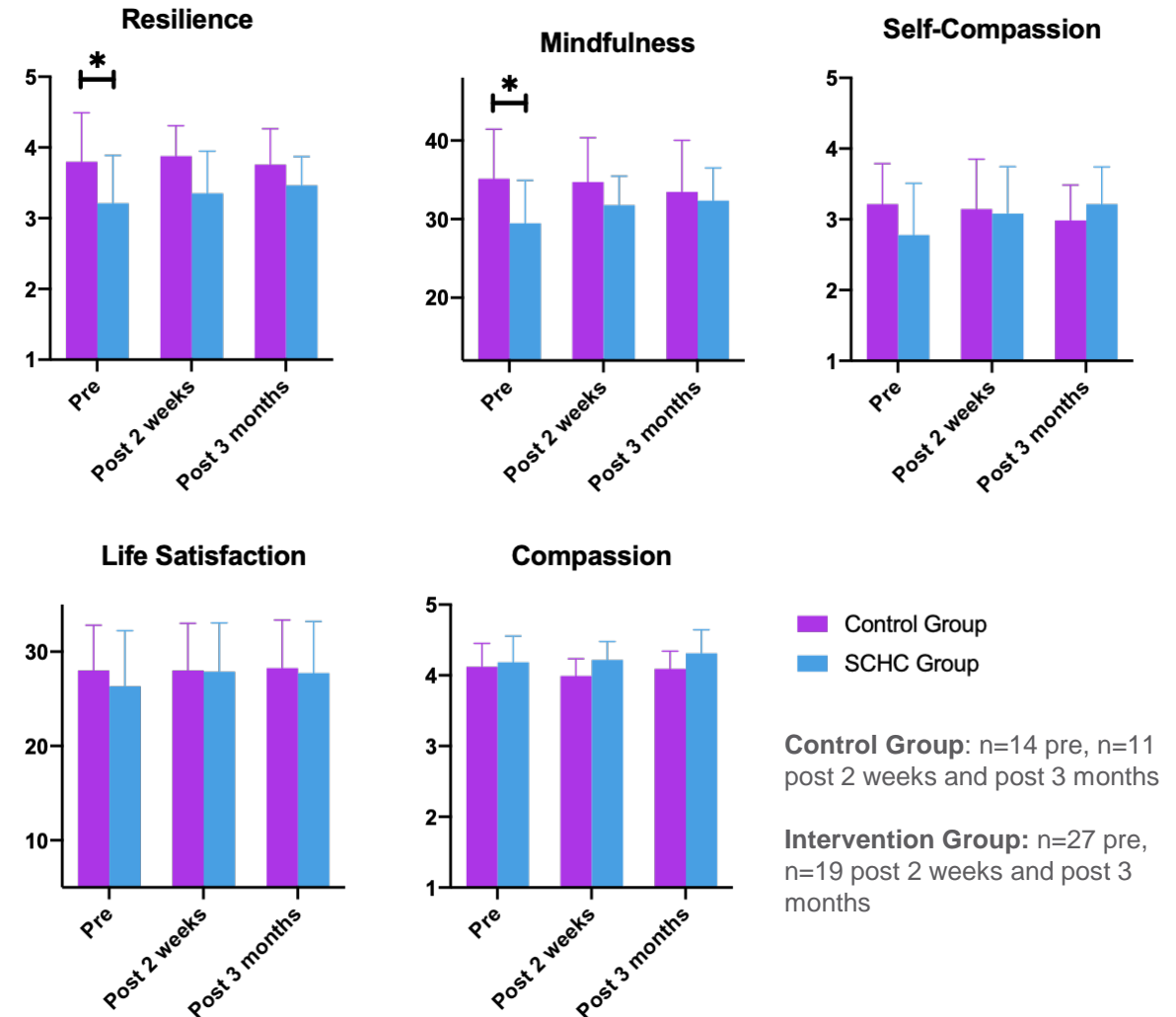
- Pre-post study design
- Measures: resilience, life satisfaction, mindfulness, compassion, self-compassion, stress, anxiety, depression, burnout
- Anonymous surveys completed 2 weeks prior to intervention, 2 weeks and 3 months post-intervention

Qualitative Measures

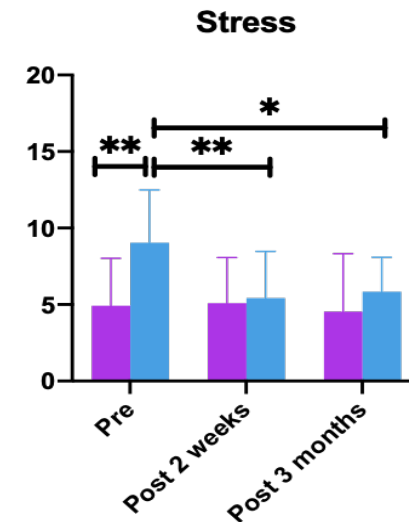
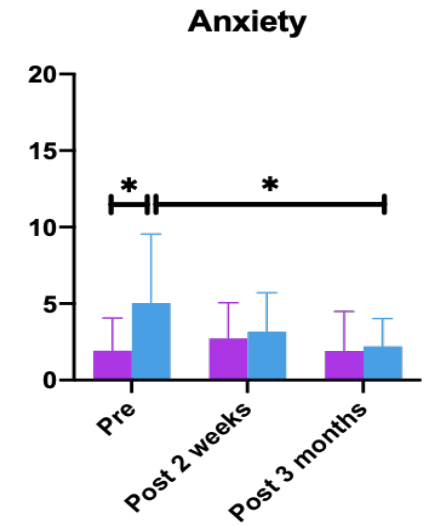
- Focus groups conducted 2 weeks post-intervention

Results: Quantitative

- Prior to taking the SCHC course, learners who opted to take the course demonstrated significantly less resilience and mindfulness compared to their peers who did not take the course
- Learners who took the SCHC course achieved higher levels of resilience and mindfulness that were similar to their peers
- Although not significant, trends demonstrated increasing levels of self-compassion among learners who took the SCHC course



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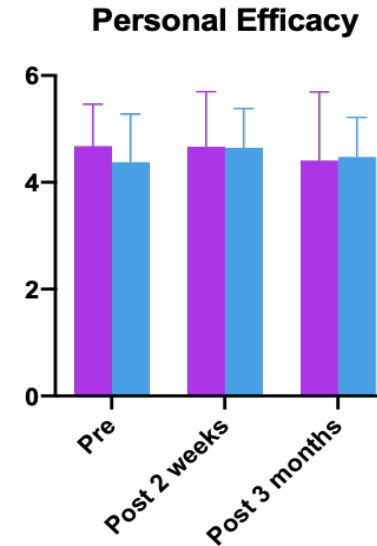
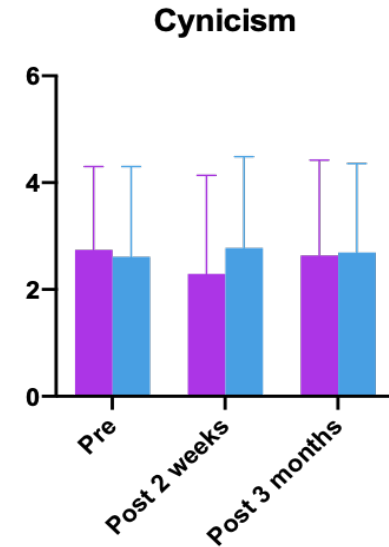
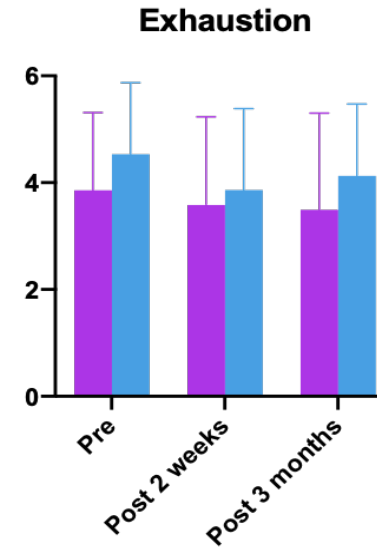
Intervention Group: n=27 pre, n=19 post 2 weeks and post 3 months

Results: Quantitative

- The SCHC course did not have an impact on burnout among learners

Related to online learning?

- “Virtual learning has been rough.”
- “We’re doing a bunch of online school, and it was really tough on the mental health.”
- “Having another online [session] in this pandemic is pretty tough.”



■ Control Group
■ SCHC Group

Control Group: n=14 pre, n=11 post 2 weeks and post 3 months

Intervention Group: n=27 pre, n=19 post 2 weeks and post 3 months

Results: Qualitative

Tools in the Toolbelt

“

“I do think that, like at baseline I'm better at kind of tackling stressful things as they come my way”

”

- SCHC provides an extra tool for managing intense emotions or high stress
- While feelings of stress did not go away, the course served as a framework for identifying and facing those feelings



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Results: Qualitative

Emotional Connection

“For me very much at the beginning of this year was sort of like mourning all of the regular social interaction[...] so this was an opportunity to sort of connect on a more emotional level and be able to just sort of bond over that shared experience of struggling through everything happening right now like, not just sort of the unprecedented times, but also just the very regular reality of being a first year medical student”

- Students valued the opportunity to connect with peers from both East and West campuses, particularly through time of social isolation
- Participants noted bonding over shared experiences and stressors in medical school

Results: Qualitative

Mindful Self-Compassion as Curriculum

“

“it means the school and the local health care culture is putting self compassion and mental health more to the forefront”

”

- Students discussed the benefits of the program being offered by the school such as:
 - time
 - culture shift
 - school-life balance



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Conclusion

- At-risk Phase 1 learners appear to be more likely to voluntarily participate in the SCHC course, and will benefit the most from it
- The SCHC course is most effective in significantly decreasing levels of anxiety and stress in Phase 1 learners at NOSM, but appears to help with depression as well
- The SCHC course also appears to improve resilience, mindfulness and self-compassion among Phase 1 medical learners at NOSM
- Participants described a desire to participate, and came away with tools to manage stress and intense emotions
- Phase 1 learners described positive feeling associated with having the SCHC course associated with NOSM curriculum as optional learning

Conclusion



Phase 1 learners benefit from the offering of self-compassion training early in medical education, as an effective means of enhancing mental health and well-being.



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