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# Effects of Heartfulness meditation on the wellbeing of Indian physicians and medical students

**Submission date**
30/06/2023

**Recruitment status**
No longer recruiting

**Registration date**
04/07/2023

**Overall study status**
Completed

**Last Edited**
12/09/2024

**Condition category**
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

## Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Healthcare providers, including medical students and physicians, encounter notable challenges regarding burnout and loneliness, posing detrimental effects on their well-being and patient care. Physicians of Indian origin in the United States specifically face higher burnout levels than their counterparts. In India, medical students and physicians also confront substantial challenges concerning burnout and loneliness. Considering the potential benefits of meditation in mitigating stress and burnout among healthcare providers, including physicians and medical students, it is crucial to investigate its impact on these populations. The Heartfulness meditation practice, a specific method of meditation, has been shown to decrease loneliness, improve sleep, and reduce burnout in healthcare workers. This study aims to investigate the impacts of a virtual, heart-based meditation program (Heartfulness practice) on the Indian medical student and physician populations in India and the Indian physician population in the United States.

Who can participate?
Physicians of Indian origin residing in the United States, physicians and medical students residing in India

What does the study involve?
After baseline surveys are completed, physicians are randomly allocated into the intervention group and the control group for a 4-week intervention considered Phase I of the study. The intervention group will participate in the Virtual Heartfulness meditation program, which will include one orientation session, three education and guided relaxation and meditation sessions over three consecutive days, three weekly group education and meditation sessions and daily self-paced meditation practices. In addition, the Heartfulness trainer-guided virtual sessions will be offered which will be conducted daily, 5 days a week for the duration of the study period by Heartfulness trainer and primary investigator Dr Kunal Desai or other Heartfulness trainers only via Webinar mode to maintain the privacy of the participants. Heartfulness trainers will be assigned to participants and will offer individual guided sessions twice a week during the study period.
The control group will not partake in any programming and will continue with regular daily

activities. At the end of the 4 weeks, all participants will be required to complete surveys.
At the end of the first 4-week intervention, emails will be sent to all participants asking for voluntary participation in Phase II of the study. The control group will be invited to participate in the same 4-week Heartfulness meditation program mentioned above. The intervention group will be invited to continue to participate in the program, with an opportunity to complete a total 8-week program. At the end of the 8 weeks, all participants will be required to complete surveys. All participants in both groups will be provided with information, including recorded video presentations for Heartfulness meditation practice, at the end of the 8 weeks.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants who complete the Heartfulness meditation program may experience reduced burnout and may have an improved sense of emotional wellness and improvement in satisfaction with life.
In the practice of meditation, although calmness is induced, there can also be the experience of unwanted emotions and thoughts arising and passing. There may also be bodily discomfort through sitting for a prolonged period.

Where is the study run from?
Wright State University (USA)

When is the study starting, and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2023 to April 2025

Who is funding the study?
Investigator initiated and funded

Who is the main contact?
Dr Kunal Desai, kunal.desai@wright.edu

# Contact information

### Type(s)
Principal investigator

### Contact name
Dr Kunal Desai

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# Additional identifiers

### Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

### ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

### Protocol serial number
Nil known

# Study information

### Scientific Title
Impact of Heartfulness meditation practices on burnout, loneliness, and satisfaction with life among Indian physicians and medical students: a randomized controlled survey study

### Study objectives
Heartfulness meditation practice may reduce burnout and loneliness and increase satisfaction with life among Indian physicians and medical students.

### Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

### Ethics approval(s)
approved 26/06/2023, Wright State University Institutional Review Board (3640 Colonel Glenn Highway, Dayton, 45435, United States of America; +1 (0)937 775 4462; irb-rsp@wright.edu), ref: IRB-2023-309

### Study design
Prospective randomized controlled crossover study

### Primary study design
Interventional

### Study type(s)
Quality of life

### Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Burnout and loneliness

### Interventions
The baseline survey will obtain demographic information, detailed in the Participant Detail Form, as well as responses to the UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale (ULS-3), the abbreviated Maslach Burnout Inventory (aMBI), and Satisfaction with Life (SWLS).

After baseline surveys are completed, physicians interested in study participation will be separated, through computerized randomization, into the intervention group and the control group for a 4-week intervention considered Phase I of the study. The intervention group will participate in the Virtual Heartfulness meditation program, which will include one orientation session, three education and guided relaxation and meditation sessions over three consecutive days, three weekly group education and meditation sessions and daily self-paced meditation practices. In addition, the Heartfulness trainer-guided virtual sessions will be offered which will be conducted daily, 5 days a week for the duration of the study period by Heartfulness trainer and primary investigator Dr. Kunal Desai or other Heartfulness trainers only via Webinar mode to

maintain the privacy of the participants. Heartfulness trainers will be assigned to participants and will offer individual guided sessions twice a week during the study period. This will help reduce the attrition observed in the previous studies.

The control group will not partake in any programming and will continue with regular daily activities. At the end of the 4 weeks, all participants will be required to complete the Phase I Completion survey that includes the ULS-3, aMBI, and SWLS reassessments. Additionally, the intervention group participants will be required to complete the Qualitative Feedback Survey and Practice Frequency Survey.

Upon completion of the first 4-week intervention, email communication will be sent to all participants asking for voluntary participation in Phase II of the study. The control group will be invited to participate in the same 4-week Heartfulness meditation program mentioned above. The intervention group will be invited to continue to participate in the program, with an opportunity to complete a total 8-week program.

At the end of the 8 weeks, all participants will be required to complete the Qualitative Feedback Survey, Practice Frequency Survey, and Phase II Completion Survey that includes ULS-3, aMBI, and SWLS reassessments.

All participants in both groups will be provided with information, including recorded video presentations for Heartfulness meditation practice, at the end of the 8 weeks.

### Intervention Type
Behavioural

### Primary outcome(s)
1. Loneliness measured using the UCLA 3-Item Loneliness Scale (ULS-3) at baseline, week 4 and week 8
2. Burnout measured using the abbreviated Maslach Burnout Inventory (aMBI) at baseline, week 4 and week 8
3. Satisfaction with life measured using the Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) at baseline, week 4 and week 8

### Key secondary outcome(s))
Subjective experience measured using qualitative questions at baseline, week 4 and week 8

### Completion date
01/04/2025

## Eligibility

### Key inclusion criteria
1. Adults above 18 years of age are willing to participate in the study
2. Physicians of Indian origin residing in the United States
3. Physicians residing in India and medical students enrolled medical schools in India
4. Requires basic knowledge of the Internet and ability to follow instructions regarding email communications as well as accessing video conferences

### Participant type(s)
Health professional

### Healthy volunteers allowed
No

### Age group
Adult

### Lower age limit
18 years

### Sex
All

### Key exclusion criteria
1. Individuals less than 18 years of age
2. Participants with a history of meditation practice (≥100 hours of meditation) will be excluded from the study to avoid participant bias
3. Any person under medical care for depression or other mental health conditions is encouraged not to participate or only participate after discussion with his/her healthcare provider so that the study participation does not interfere with current treatment

### Date of first enrolment
01/02/2025

### Date of final enrolment
01/03/2025

## Locations

### Countries of recruitment
India

United States of America

### Study participating centre
**Not applicable**
United States of America
-

## Sponsor information

### Organisation
Wright State University

### ROR

https://ror.org/04qk6pt94

# Funder(s)

**Funder type**
Other

**Funder Name**
Investigator initiated and funded

# Results and Publications

**Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan**
The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are unknown and will be made available at a later date.

**IPD sharing plan summary**
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

**Study outputs**

| Output type | Details | Date created | Date added | Peer reviewed? | Patient-facing? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant information sheet | Participant information sheet | 11/11/2025 | 11/11/2025 | No | Yes |