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## Meditation's effect on attentional efficiency, stress and mindfulness characteristics of nursing students

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Nursing practice in today's dynamic healthcare workplace is an increasingly complex and cognitively distracting enterprise in which multiple and shifting sources of information must be accurately interpreted and acted upon, while also managing workflow interruptions. Stress and cognitive overload are frequently reported by novice nurses and these are known to exacerbate human error. To ensure the delivery of safe, quality patient care additional nursing education strategies are needed to adequately prepare graduates for this level of cognitive complexity. Recent and accumulating neuroscientific research suggests a strong correlation between the regular practice of focused meditation such as Mindfulness Meditation (MM) and enhanced attentional capacity. Regular practice of MM is also associated with improved feelings of well-being, compassion and other mental-health benefits useful in mediating stress. This study examined these findings in the context of nursing education by measuring the differences between pre-licensure nursing students who meditated and those who did not, on attentional efficiency, stress and mindfulness outcomes. Students who participated in four weeks of daily MM practice demonstrated significant improvement to executive attention efficiency as compared to a non-meditating control group. Additional outcomes specific to the meditation group were reduced stress and increased mindfulness. These results support consideration of meditation training as a curriculum innovation for increasing attentional efficiency of nursing students as well as improved self-regulation of stress, each of which may in turn improve the delivery of safe, quality patient care.

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