

Arsht Research on Ethics and Community Grant

Exploring the Impact of Mindfulness Training on Mindfulness and Ethical Decision Making

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Faculty: Mary McKay, DNP, ARNP, CNE

Student: Jill S. Sanko, MS, ARNP-BC, CHSE

School of Nursing and Health Studies

Abstract

The current demanding healthcare environment makes it difficult for nurses and other healthcare professionals to provide patients with undivided mindful attention. Studies have found that distracted healthcare providers may engage in ineffective clinical decisions, medical errors and unethical behaviors which ultimately endanger patient outcomes. Individuals who have higher levels of mindfulness as compared to individuals with low levels report that they are more likely to act ethically, are more likely to uphold ethical standards and use formalism (a principled approach to ethical decision making). Further, lack of attention has been cited as an important factor in intensifying unethical behavior in the form of self-serving cognition, self-deception and unconscious biases. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of mindfulness training in medical education. Mindfulness training has been successful in decreasing physician and medical student stress levels, improving coping skills, increasing empathy and cognition as well improving patient outcomes and safety. While structured activities to foster mindfulness are incorporated in residency programs and medical school curricula, few schools of nursing or hospitals offer mindfulness training to nurses. The proposed project is collaboration between the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies and the University of Miami Mindfulness Research and Practice Initiative. Through this collaboration we will develop and implement a sustainable on-line mindfulness program which can continue to be used beyond the completion of the proposed project. In addition, we will evaluate the impact of mindfulness training on mindfulness levels and on ethical decision making in pre-licensure nursing students and practicing nurses.

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