

# Mindfulness Tools (MT) for Health and Wellness for Cancer Patients During COVID-19 Pandemic

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***Mindfulness is paying attention in the present moment on purpose non-judgmentally and watching the awareness that arises. Jon Kabat-Zinn PhD***

## Background:

MT has been offered for cancer patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers through the University of Vermont Medical Center beginning in 2010. MT is an evidence-based program proven to foster stress reduction, symptom management, and improve quality of life. It is based on the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program started by Jon Kabat-Zinn PhD.

In 2015 the impact of MT was examined on physical and psychosocial outcomes among cancer survivors, as well as their use of pharmaceuticals to manage symptoms.<sup>1</sup>

Here we compare the delivery of MT using online classes necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic to prior onsite classes.

## Methods:

Compare and contrast participant experience and satisfaction of the delivery of MT on an online platform (2020) to the prior in person onsite delivery of classes (2010-2019).

Evaluations were collected from participants in both the onsite (n=267) and online (n=9) classes.

Data on stress reduction, pain relief, and willingness to recommend program to others were collected.

## Results:

Comparison of evaluations (22 classes) from 2010-2019 with three online classes held in 2020. Results show evidence of reduction in stress and physical symptoms (pain) and if participants would recommend the class.

### MT results from Fall 2010 – Spring 2019 ONSITE 8-week classes

Evaluation Question	Percent agree or strongly agree
Class helped reduce stress	95%
Class helped reduce pain	74%
Would recommend to CA pts	99%

Based on 267 participant evaluations from 22 Mindfulness Tool programs taught at University of Vermont Medical Center VT Cancer Center

### MT Results from three 2020 ONLINE<sup>1</sup> 8-Week classes

Evaluation Question	Percent agree or strongly agree
Class helped reduce stress	92%
Class helped reduce pain	31% <sup>2</sup>
Would recommend to CA pts	85%

Of 28 participants, 9 returned course evaluations

## Conclusions:

Participants report feeling “doubly isolated” from navigating the challenges of their cancer diagnoses and isolation from family, friends, and support systems. Of the online participants 69% stated this option worked well for them. A need was identified to improve online evaluation participation.

## Discussion:

Addressing mental health and managing anxiety and stress have been identified among six recommendations for cancer patients during COVID-19.<sup>2</sup> Included in these recommendations are meditation and yoga, practices fundamental to MT.

We are currently in the process of strategic planning with the help of a consultant to determine a future vision for the program

## References:

1. Votovec, C. (2015). The impacts of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on pharmaceutical use among cancer patients [PowerPoint slides]. Rubenstein School of Environment & Natural Resources, University of Vermont.
2. Mauri D, Kamposioras K, Tolia M, Alongi F, Tzachanis D. Summary of international recommendations in 23 languages for patients with cancer during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lancet Oncol 2020 Jun 21 (6) 759-760.

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