



Evening Medical Update: Capability Outwith Clinical Work **December 2020**

Mindfulness in medicine and medical education – Dr Susan Chater

I believe that we all know about the positive effects of what is named 'mindfulness' today, but the question is, how can we make it happen in the current culture?

In some respects it IS happening in the current culture. There are thousands of people practicing Mindfulness all over the world that weren't 20 or 30 years ago. It has become more mainstream in medicine and medical education, and part of many therapies. Also it's been incorporated into many schools (Mindfulness in Schools MiSP and ".b"). It is worth looking at the new version of Jon Kabat Zinn's "coming to our senses" that is now in 4 separate books :(i) Meditation is not what you think: why it is so important; (ii) Falling awake: how to practice mindfulness in everyday life; (iii) The Healing power of Mindfulness and (iv) Mindfulness for all: the wisdom to transform the world. They came out in 2018/2019. The last book may have some answers.

Great lecture! I would love to see mindfulness practices implemented into medicine. If you had to implement one practice in a hospital, what would it be?

This is a hard question, as in a hospital setting (depending on size/country/how it's funded/etc.) you have to get some "buy in" at an administrative/management/educational level. So at an administrative or management level the approach may be through "wellbeing" for staff, whereas at an educational level it may find a conduit through teaching communication skills and self-awareness to nurses and doctors and students. I also believe that there are people within our hospitals who have the skills and experience to teach some of these skills/practices (and some with significant training), but can't get access to the right platform/opportunity. From my experience I have become aware of people within hospitals who have taken training (Medics/nurses/AHP's chaplains), and they don't know about each other. So getting a small community of interested people helps. You also need one or two really committed people to do the ground work, and it helps if they are well connected within the institution. Having said all this you may have to start of very small offering to teach very short meditations (as in Monash) at lunch times in a quiet room or chapel (or similar quiet space). A rather long winded answer, but hope it's been of some help. One other comment - people often talk about mindfulness apps, but generally most people don't use them on a long term or committed basis, and when starting off its always helpful to have a group effort.

Could you please send the link for the SoundCloud Podcast Epstein 1999 and 2014.

Here is the podcast I mentioned and a few more interviews with Ron Epstein, which are all very interesting.

- <https://soundcloud.com/user-499494424/ronald-epstein-interview>
- <https://soundcloud.com/cmajpodcasts/epstein-horton>
- <https://soundcloud.com/untangle/dr-ron-epstein-a-perspective-on-medicine-mindfulness-and-humanity-for-better-healthcare>
- <https://soundcloud.com/user-499494424/ronald-epstein-interview>

The 1999 reference is not a podcast but a paper, which is often quoted and well worth reading: Epstein, R. Mindful Practice. JAMA 262:833-839, and the 1914 reference is from The Wiley handbook of Mindfulness, Chp 30 titled "What will it take for physicians to practice mindfully?" [Eds: Le; Ngnoumen;Langer]. This is also an excellent read



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I am curious whether any study was done to compare positive mindful practice effects with positive prayer practice effects?

I am not aware of any studies comparing mindfulness with positive prayer practices, but I would say that there is a spectrum as to how people see Mindfulness practice from "stress reduction" at one end to a true spiritual practice and way of being.