

Meditation Education for Cardiac Rehabilitation Patients

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ABSTRACT

Cardiovascular disease has become the leading public health concern facing our nation. The American Heart Association estimates someone dies every 38 seconds from heart disease. Individuals who experience a severe cardiac incident are often required to undergo rehabilitation as part of their treatment program to improve overall cardiac function. Cardiac rehabilitation provides patients with guided, prescribed exercise programs that encourage the development of healthful behaviors to improve quality of life. Stress has been highly implicated as a contributing factor of cardiovascular disease. Chronic stress causes cardiovascular reactivity, elevations in stress-related hormones and depressed immune function increasing risk of additional cardiac episodes. Research has suggested that cardiac patients learn techniques to control and alleviate stress. One of the most effective stress management techniques proposed is the practice of mindfulness and meditation. **PURPOSE:** To improve quality of life for cardiac rehab patients by implementing a meditation station to educate patients on the benefits associated with meditation and its various forms in order to reduce stress. **METHODS:** A meditation station was created in the clinic as part of the patient daily routine. The station included a Kindle with the Headspace app, headphones, and informational signage on how to use the app and meditation benefits. The cardiac rehabilitation exercise physiologists and on-staff nurses were provided an educational presentation on the importance of stress reduction, benefits of meditation, and how to use the Headspace app. Each cardiac rehab patient was provided with an informational handout and a one on one education session on how to use the station. Patients were encouraged to complete a 1-5 min meditation session at the end of their rehab routine. The number of sessions and total length of time were collected on the meditation app. **RESULTS:** Twenty-five patients were given a one-on-one education session about stress as a risk factor and the benefits of meditation as a stress management technique. After four weeks, 15 sessions for a total of 59 minutes of activity were logged on the Headspace app at the meditation station. In that time, eight patients voluntarily used this station after the education session and two of the patients were repeat users. **CONCLUSION:** Minutes of usage will continue to be monitored over the next few months along with blood pressure and stress levels pre and post workouts. Behavior change is a long and difficult process. Continued education over the benefits of meditation will hopefully encourage more patients to include this station in their daily cardiac rehab routine.