Andrew Safer

Mindfulness Instructor & Trainer – Workshop Facilitator – Author

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

andrew@safermindfulness.com

www.safermindfulness.com

(709) 771-6908

The Business Case for Mindfulness Training

January 14, 2025

Reduction in Healthcare Costs, Stress, Burnout, and Absenteeism

A sampling of research conducted on Mindfulness Training and its impact on healthcare costs and absenteeism is summarized below.

1. "Economic Evaluations of Mindfulness-Based Interventions: a Systematic Review"

Lingling Zhang [1], Snehal Lopes [2,✉], Tara Lavelle [3], Karyn Ogata Jones [4], Liwei Chen [5], Meenu Jindal [6,7], Heidi Zinzow [8], Lu Shi [2]

Following the researchers' full-text review of 58 relevant articles, 28 studies met the criteria to be included in this study.

"Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) among patients with various physical/mental conditions was associated with reductions in healthcare costs. Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) was also less costly and

more effective than the comparison group among patients with depression, medically unexplained symptoms, and multiple sclerosis.

The results from this study can help insurers, administrators, providers, employers, and patients to make more strategic and informed decisions related to using or enrolling in any specific types of Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) with respect to patient conditions and needs, as well as assisting providers in anticipating and planning for costs for training and certification of MBIs.

MBSR has been shown effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression, perceived stress, blood pressure, and body mass index among patients with coronary heart disease (Parswani et al., 2013). Strong and consistent evidence indicates that MBIs can lower blood pressure (Parswani et al., 2013; Shi et al., 2017), and MBSR generally shows promise in addressing symptoms for people with hypertension (Conversano et al., 2021). MBIs have growing support as a promising treatment for obesity-related eating behaviors as well (O'Reilly et al., 2014). Cost-effectiveness or cost analyses on MBIs for people with cardiovascular conditions would be informative. In addition, arthritis ranks among the top five chronic diseases which contribute the most to national healthcare expenditures (Lee et al., 2017). Economic evaluations of MBIs with demonstrated effects among arthritis patients could also be worthwhile.

Similarly, with the ongoing and growing healthcare impacts resulting from opioid addiction and other substance misuse disorders (Haight et al., 2018), MBIs for those in recovery for substance misuse disorders, such as Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (MBRP), have been developed and standardized to become a notable option to control addictive behaviors (Garland, 2016; Grant et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017). However, economic evaluations of MBIs targeting substance misuse/relapse prevention have not been conducted. Given the substantial healthcare burden of drug and alcohol misuse disorders (Barrio et al., 2017; Inocencio et al., 2013) and MBIs' emerging role in reducing substance abuse, future research needs to address these research gaps with rigorous study designs."

2. "Improving Health and Reducing Absence Days at Work: Effects of a Mindfulness- and Skill-Based Leadership Intervention on Supervisor and Employee Sick Days"

Mindfulness, Vol. 14, pages 1751-1766, June 29, 2023

A 3-day Mindfulness-Based Program (MBP) was conducted with 13 supervisors and 196 employees, and control groups for each. The supervisors in the MBP had an average of 13.9 post-intervention sick days, compared to 32.9 sick days for the control group. For the employees, there was no significant difference between MBP and control group.

"Our results indicate that MBPs for supervisors at the workplace have the potential to positively affect their nonspecific sick days. Although these effects did not occur at the employee level, the data provide a first indication that MBPs offered at the workplace might be cost-effective."

3. "How Mindfulness Could Slash Health-Care Costs By Reducing Burnout and Attrition"

By Justin Burkett, *Canadian Nurse,* December 7, 2020

"Hospitals in which burnout was reduced by 30% had a total of 6,239 fewer infections, for an annual cost saving of up to [US]$68 million" (Cimiotti, Aiken, Sloane, & Wu, 2012).

Mindfulness, no longer viewed as a mystical eastern philosophy, has been shown in many rigorous scientific studies to be effective in reducing symptoms of physical, mental and emotional stress that lead to low productivity, burnout and illness. In one

example, the health-care insurance company Aetna estimated that since instituting its mindfulness program, it has saved about US$2,000 per employee in health-care costs and gained about US$3,000 per employee in productivity (Levin, 2017; Pinsker, 2015).

Highly researched evidence-based programs, such as Kabat-Zinn's MBSR program, have proven that ongoing mindfulness practices in the workplace are able to provide nurses with the mental resiliency and emotional capacity to manage deepening care complexities and ever-changing population health needs.

A cultural shift toward mindfulness in the workplace is a sustainable, cost-effective way that can achieve immediate and long-lasting human-centred and financial results.

On a recent post-intervention questionnaire, 84.9 per cent of nurses said they used a mindfulness exercise at work, with 57.1 per cent finding it effective in reducing stress. At the conclusion of the study, 57.6 per cent of nurses said they were interested in learning more about mindfulness (Montanari, Bowe, Chesak, & Cutshall, 2019).

Evidence clearly shows that even three minutes a day of mindfulness meditation practice can change brain structure, effectively decreasing stress and boosting resiliency (Davidson, 2019). Practitioners of mindfulness report that these skills add increased emotional capacity and cognition, which are translated into more empathy for their patients, improved interpersonal relationships, better sleep and a deeper sense of purpose. Health-care organizations that embed mindfulness practices in their workplace cultures may not only positively affect their budgets, but may also attract and retain a new generation of nurses who are committed and mentally prepared to address tomorrow's challenges.

4. "The Advantages of Mindfulness Training in Corporate Settings"

By *Corporate Wellness Magazine*

Expanding on the Benefits

1. <mark>Reduction in Healthcare Costs: Mindfulness can potentially lower healthcare costs by reducing chronic stress, a major risk factor for numerous health issues.</mark>
2. Enhanced Creativity and Innovation: A clear, focused mind is a fertile ground for creative thinking and problem-solving, crucial in today's dynamic business environment.
3. <mark>Improved Employee Retention: Workplaces that prioritize employee well-being, including mental health, tend to have higher retention rates</mark>.
4. Cultivating a Positive Workplace Culture: Mindfulness fosters a more empathetic and understanding workplace culture, which is essential for employee satisfaction.

5. "Drive Down Healthcare Costs"

Institute for Organizational Science and Mindfulness website
https://www.iomindfulness.org/about-the-business-case

"Companies are caught between increasingly overwhelmed, exhausted employees on one hand, and the escalating costs of treating stress-related chronic illness, on the other. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), <mark>the cost of workplace burnout is more than $300 billion a year, and employers spend up to three times the direct cost in the form of absenteeism, sick days and lower productivity</mark>.

Today, the most common reason that employers cite for adopting a mindfulness program is simple — It is a <mark>remarkably effective intervention that drives health care costs down.</mark> Progressive employers are routinely reporting <mark>dramatic decreases in chronic stress levels and burnout, and double-digit increases in regained productivity.</mark>"