Study shows the promise of mindfulness for people living with Long Term Conditions.

As the numbers of people living with a Long Term Condition (LTC) increases worldwide, a new study ‘Starting Where I Am’ explores how practising mindfulness can positively affect the experience of those living with a LTC. It also suggests that mindfulness can play an important role as a facilitator of transition, enabling people to more easily adapt and come to terms to living with a LTC.

By 2018, it is estimated that there will 2.9 million people living with at least one LTC in England. Life with a LTC can present significant challenges. LTCs are often complex and time-consuming to treat, and healthcare provision often fails to meet the needs for long-term integrated care. Daily functioning can be affected, impacting on quality of life and economic status. People can experience feelings of loss, anger, anxiety, low self-esteem and a loss of a sense of identity. Some LTCs are also under-recognised, which can undermine the sense of having a legitimate illness.

Research author, Dr Jaqui Long, School of Midwifery and Nursing, De Montfort University, Leicester, says: ‘We felt that this research was important as most evidence on mindfulness relates to short-term outcomes and there was limited information on the longer term impact. We were able to interview people who had been benefitting from mindfulness for up to nine years. In addition, given the challenges for both individuals with LTCs and healthcare professionals, there is an enormous need to identify effective self-management interventions, particularly for those whose psychological wellbeing has been affected. Our study shows that mindfulness can really help.”

This research study was based upon extensive interviews with 41 participants in the Breathworks Mindfulness for Health programme, an 8-week course that was developed for people living with pain or long-term health conditions. Participants reported overwhelmingly positive experiences: almost all identified significant changes in their thinking and behaviour. Gloria, a participant living with a LTC, said of learning mindfulness: “It’s just made me happy,
it’s made me want to live and embrace life. I’ve realised that wallowing on my condition won’t help and I don’t think I would have got there without meditation.”

Colin Duff, Breathworks Business and Research Manager, says: “It has been a great opportunity to be part of the 'Starting Where I Am' study. Research is vital in building an evidence base to demonstrate and communicate the benefits of mindfulness as a health intervention, which we have seen in the improved lives of participants over many years. This study strongly suggests that the Mindfulness for Health programme can be a supportive intervention for people living with, and coming to terms with, long-term health conditions.”

The findings of ‘Starting Where I Am’ confirm that mindfulness can offer a valuable self-management intervention, enabling significant long-term changes in how people cope with and manage a range of physical and mental health conditions. Dr Jaqui Long continues: “Developing and living with a LTC can have a huge impact on a person’s quality of life. Our study has also provided new insights into the complex and ongoing nature of transition which may enable health professionals to support patients more effectively on their journey towards adjusting to life with a LTC. We hope that mindfulness as a facilitator of transition and as a self-management tool will be explored further.”

www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/research

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Notes to editors:


Breathworks mission is to help people living with pain, stress and illness to lead happier, healthier lives. Breathworks are internationally recognised leaders in Mindfulness Based Pain Management (MBPM), providing Mindfulness for Health and Mindfulness for Stress programmes. Breathworks is a not for profit; social enterprise, registered in England and Wales with Companies House and the Community Interest Company Regulator. Breathworks has helped tens of thousands of people find relief from chronic pain, illness and stress. Breathworks has a network of accredited trainers across 15 countries helping thousands of people, UK patients are regularly recommended to Breathworks by NHS doctors and specialist pain clinics.