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Media Advisory: To contact Daniel C. Cherkin, Ph.D., call Rebecca Hughes at 206-287-2055 or email [hughes.r@ghc.org](mailto:hughes.r@ghc.org). To contact editorial co-author Madhav Goyal, M.D., M.P.H., call Marin Hedin at 410-502-9429 or email [mhedin2@jhmi.edu](mailto:mhedin2@jhmi.edu).

**To place an electronic embedded link to this study and editorial in your story** These links will be live at the embargo time: <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?doi=10.1001/jama.2016.2323>; <http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?doi=10.1001/jama.2016.2437>

**Use of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Results in Greater Improvement of Chronic Low Back Pain Compared to Usual Care**

Among adults with chronic low back pain, both mindfulness-based stress reduction and cognitive behavioral therapy resulted in greater improvement in back pain and functional limitations when compared with usual care, according to a study appearing in the March 22/29 issue of *JAMA.*

Low back pain is a leading cause of disability in the United States. There is need for treatments with demonstrated effectiveness that are low risk and have potential for widespread availability. Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) focuses on increasing awareness and acceptance of moment-to-moment experiences including physical discomfort and difficult emotions. Only 1 large randomized clinical trial has evaluated MBSR for chronic low back pain, and that trial was limited to older adults.

Daniel C. Cherkin, Ph.D., of Group Health Research Institute, Seattle, and colleagues randomly assigned 342 adults age 20 to 70 years with chronic low back pain to receive MBSR (n = 116), cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT; n = 113), or usual care (n = 113). CBT (training to change pain-related thoughts and behaviors) and MBSR (training in mindfulness meditation and yoga) were delivered in 8 weekly 2-hour groups. Usual care included whatever other treatment, if any, the participants received. The average age of the participants was 49 years; the average duration of back pain was 7.3 years.

The researchers found that at 26 weeks, the percentage of participants with clinically meaningful improvement on a measure of functional limitations was higher for those who received MBSR (61 percent) and CBT (58 percent) than for usual care (44 percent). The percentage of participants with clinically meaningful improvement in pain bothersomeness at 26 weeks was 44 percent in the MBSR group and 45 percent in the CBT group, vs 27 percent in the usual care group. Findings for MBSR persisted with little change at 52 weeks for both primary outcomes.

“The effects were moderate in size, which has been typical of evidence-based treatments recommended for chronic low back pain. These benefits are remarkable given that only 51 percent of those randomized to receive MBSR and 57 percent of those randomized to receive CBT attended at least 6 of the 8 sessions,” the authors write.

“These findings suggest that MBSR may be an effective treatment option for patients with chronic low back pain.”

(doi:10.1001/jama.2016.2323; this study is available pre-embargo at the For The Media [website](http://media.jamanetwork.com/).)

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**Editorial: Is It Time to Make Mind-Body Approaches Available for Chronic Low Back Pain?**

“Although understanding the specificity of treatment effects, mechanisms of action, and role of mediators are important issues for researchers, they are merely academic for many clinicians and their patients. For patients with chronic painful conditions, options are needed to help them live with less pain and disability now,” write Madhav Goyal, M.D., M.P.H., and Jennifer A. Haythornthwaite, Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore.

“The challenge is how to ensure that these mind-body interventions are available, given the existing evidence demonstrating they may work for some patients with chronic low back pain. Most physicians encounter numerous obstacles finding appropriate referrals for mind-body therapies that their patients can access and afford. High-quality studies such as the clinical trial by Cherkin et al create a compelling argument for ensuring that an evidence-based health care system should provide access to affordable mind-body therapies.”

(doi:10.1001/jama.2016.2437; this editorial is available pre-embargo at the For The Media [website](http://media.jamanetwork.com/).)

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