

Translating Thich Nhat Hanh's Teachings Into Scientific Spaces: Application and Research of Mindfulness Within Healthcare

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Acknowledgement of Traditional Land

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the **Huron-Wendat**, the **Seneca**, and the **Mississaugas of the Credit**. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

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Training



Order of Interbeing, 14 Mindfulness Trainings
Thich Nhat Hanh, Plum Village, France



Certified Teacher
Search Inside Yourself Leadership Institute

Ongoing collaboration/partnerships



The Mindfulness Project Team, SickKids Hospital



Ontario Hospital Association

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RESEARCH ASPIRATIONS

- Intention at the heart of ongoing research/work: **build bridges between science and Dharma**
- How to conduct research on mindfulness while mindfully researching?

Meditators since the beginning of time have known that they must use their own eyes and the language of their own times to express their insight. Wisdom is a living stream, not an icon to be preserved in a museum. Only when a practitioner finds the spring of wisdom in his or her own life can it flow to future generations. Keeping the torch of wisdom glowing is the work of all of us who know how to clear a path through the forest in order to walk on ahead.

- Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Sun My Heart* p.vii

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RESEARCH STUDY



STUDY PROTOCOL
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Applied Mindfulness for Physician Wellbeing: A Prospective Qualitative Study Protocol

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Full study protocol available online:
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2022.807792/full>

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STUDY OVERVIEW

- ➔ **Prospective qualitative study** conducted with **physicians (n=45)** across different specialties (e.g. cardiology, emergency, surgery, neurology etc.) delivered in **3 cohorts**
- ➔ **Institutional ethics approval:** Institute of Medical Science, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto & The Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto, Canada
- ➔ **Primary outcome measure:** Thematic Analysis (TA) of post-program semi-structured interviews with subsample of participants (n=28)
- ➔ **Purposive sampling** approach applied to **enhance sample specificity:**
 - ▶ 1) longer years in medical practice
 - ▶ 2) less years of mindfulness practice

Research Question

How do physicians experience, make sense of, and engage with a five week Applied Mindfulness program and what is the impact on their personal wellbeing in the context of their daily lives?

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PROGRAM DESIGN

- **Based on the foundational teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh**
 - To date no MBIs have been based primarily on the use of Thich Nhat Hanh's teachings
 - **Iterative reciprocal relationship** was established with PV in the form of a **Monastic Advisory Committee (MAC)**
- AMP-MP is **based on a rigorous review/adaptation process of a PV five-day retreat** schedule
 - **Considered a robust representative sample of Thich Nhat Hanh's approach** to delivering the foundations for establishing a mindfulness practice

CONTENT REMOVED:

*THE DATA & GRAPHICS WILL BE
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FINDINGS

CONTENT REMOVED:

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EXCERPT FROM DISSERTATION

One surgeon during the first session expressed that they did not believe in this “*mindfulness stuff*” and then in their post-program interview stated that they “*fell in love with the bell*” and had considered “*stealing the bell*” at the end of the program so they could ring it for their colleagues before their next surgery.

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CONCLUSION: 2 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1) There Is No Need To Wait

The work of transforming burnout to cultivate occupational environments where physicians can flourish and thrive can **begin right away** through training in Applied Mindfulness. **Mindfulness can become a way of life** that benefits physician’s wellbeing, and enhancing interpersonal communication with patients, colleagues & administrators.

2) At The Same Time...

The **occupational environment of physicians can pose a significant barrier to maintaining and sustaining mindfulness** in the long-term. Further work is needed to affect change at a systems level so the work of transformation is a shared endeavour between the individual and the system.

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future studies of AMP-MP

- ▶ Expand to include **mixed HCPs, hospital administrators and staff**
- ▶ Integration into **medical education** (already piloting components in MScPT curriculum UofT)
- ▶ Other sectors such as **education, business and the criminal justice system**
- ▶ Delivery of AMP-MP through **online platforms**

What I’m working on now...

- ▶ **Publications:**
 1. Protocol published
 2. Findings currently in submission/peer review process
 3. Program paper being written in collaboration with PAC & MAC
- ▶ **Public presentations** in wide variety of settings (e.g. SickKids Compassion Rounds, Nursing Faculty UofT, PV Science retreat, College for Physicians & Surgeons, Broad Institute of MIT & Harvard)
- ▶ Potential for **further research** currently being explored in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association & the University of Toronto

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First, let us light the torch of our awareness and learn again how to drink tea, eat, wash dishes, walk, sit, drive, and work in awareness. We do not have to be swept along by circumstances. We are not just a leaf or a log in a rushing river. With awareness, each of our daily acts takes on a new meaning, and we discover that we are more than machines, that our activities are not just mindless repetitions. We find that life is a miracle, the universe is a miracle, and we too are a miracle.

- Thich Nhat Hanh (1988), The Sun My Heart, p.26

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Thank
you

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