

Alterations in brain and immune function produced by mindfulness meditation.

Davidson RJ, Kabat-Zinn J, Schumacher J, Rosenkranz M, Muller D, Santorelli SF, Urbanowski F, Harrington A, Bonus K, Sheridan JF.

Laboratory for Affective Neuroscience, Department of Psychology, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, USA. rjdavids@facstaff.wisc.edu

OBJECTIVE: The underlying changes in biological processes that are associated with reported changes in mental and physical health in response to meditation have not been systematically explored. We performed a randomized, controlled study on the effects on brain and immune function of a well-known and widely used 8-week clinical training program in mindfulness meditation applied in a work environment with healthy employees. **METHODS:** We measured brain electrical activity before and immediately after, and then 4 months after an 8-week training program in mindfulness meditation. Twenty-five subjects were tested in the meditation group. A wait-list control group (N = 16) was tested at the same points in time as the meditators. At the end of the 8-week period, subjects in both groups were vaccinated with influenza vaccine. **RESULTS:** We report for the first time significant increases in left-sided anterior activation, a pattern previously associated with positive affect, in the meditators compared with the non-meditators. We also found significant increases in antibody titers to influenza vaccine among subjects in the meditation compared with those in the wait-list control group. Finally, the magnitude of increase in left-sided activation predicted the magnitude of antibody titer rise to the vaccine. **CONCLUSIONS:** These findings demonstrate that a short program in mindfulness meditation produces demonstrable effects on brain and immune function. These findings suggest that meditation may change brain and immune function in positive ways and underscore the need for additional research.

PMID: 12883106 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]