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Integration of Transcendental Meditation® (TM) into alcohol use disorder (AUD) treatment.

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ABSTRACT

Aims: Maladaptive responses to stress are thought to play a role in addiction and relapse. Transcendental Meditation (TM) is a popular meditation technique with promising clinical applications. This study sought to: (a) examine the feasibility of providing TM during AUD treatment; (b) compare outcomes for TM vs. treatment as usual (TAU); and (c) investigate the relationship between TM practice and outcomes. **Methods:** Meditation-naïve adults with primary AUD ($N=60$; 35% female, 60% white) newly admitted to inpatient treatment were recruited in sequential cohorts (30 receiving TAU and 30 receiving TM training). Assessments were conducted at baseline and 3-months post-discharge. **Results:** Integrating TM into inpatient AUD treatment was feasible. Uptake of TM was high (85% meditating on most of the past 30 days at follow-up; 61% closely adherent to recommended practice of twice-daily TM). Participants reported high satisfaction with TM. The sample as a whole improved on multiple measures after AUD treatment, but there were no significant differences between TM and TAU cohorts. However, those practicing TM twice-daily as recommended were less likely than the rest of the sample to return to any drinking (25% vs. 59%; $p=.02$) or heavy drinking post-discharge (0% vs. 47%, $p<.001$). Greater regularity of TM practice was inversely correlated with stress, psychological distress, craving, and alcohol use at follow-up. **Conclusions:** This study established the feasibility and acceptability of using TM during AUD treatment. Consistently practicing TM (but not just learning it) was associated with better outcomes. These promising findings warrant further investigation in larger, controlled studies.

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Key Words: Transcendental Meditation, alcohol use disorder, treatment, relapse prevention, stress, craving

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Disclosures: Transcendental Meditation and TM are service marks registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office, licensed to the Maharishi Foundation. Drs. Grant and Rothenberg are employees of Maharishi Foundation USA, a non-profit organization that promotes the TM technique. Dr. Grant was an employee of the David Lynch Foundation (the granting agency) during the conduct of the study.

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