



MindWell for Healthcare Workers

Research Report

April 2022



Research Context & Summary

MindWell for Healthcare Workers

The waning mental health of healthcare workers has been a long standing issue that COVID-19 has exacerbated even further. The Canadian Federation of Nurses Union (CFNU) published a report *Mental Disorders Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada* in 2020 outlining alarming concern around levels of burnout, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as a call for more training and support needed for this vulnerable population.

The problem of healthcare worker mental health and shortages has only increased with a recent article from the *Globe and Mail* reporting that “Canadian nurses are leaving in droves, worn down by 16 merciless months on the front lines of COVID-19”.

In response to the growing concern and need, in collaboration with healthcare partners MindWell U developed a custom mental health training program for Healthcare Workers.

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Research Context & Summary Cont'd

MindWell for Healthcare Workers

MindWell for Healthcare Workers is a 4-week self-paced online training accessible from any device. MindWell for Healthcare Workers is designed for healthcare workers by healthcare workers to provide tailored workplace learning. Training is a combination of asynchronous material that participants can engage in autonomously, and live labs where they can meet online with their peers and an instructor through a digital platform.

Between May 2021 and March 2022, healthcare workers registered in the 4-week MindWell Training were invited to participate in this research evaluating changes in participant levels of mindfulness, resilience, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), burnout and anxiety. Participants completed a pre-training and post-training survey and at the end of the training program, results showed that mindfulness and resilience increased while PTSD, burnout, and anxiety decreased over time.

This report summarizes 4 cohorts of participants (total N = 278) who completed training in May, July, and December, 2021, as well as March 2022.

¹ Stelnicki, A.M., Carleton, R.N., Reichert, C. (2020). Mental Disorder Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada. Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. <https://nursesunions.ca/research/mental-disorder-symptoms/>

² Globe and Mail article by Kelly Grant. Accessed on web on July 16, 2021: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canadian-nurses-are-leaving-in-droves-worn-down-by-16-merciless-months/>

METHOD

Participants were invited to join the study when they signed up for the program. They were emailed a pre-training prior to the start of Week 1 and post-training survey at the end of Week 4. The survey measures included questions on four constructs relevant to mental health and wellbeing, particularly for healthcare workers.

MEASURES

Mindfulness was measured using the Cognitive and Affective Mindfulness Scale. Sample items include “I am able to accept the thoughts and feelings I have” and “I am able to focus on the present moment”.

Resilience was measured with the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale. Sample items include “I felt that I could achieve goals despite obstacles in my way” and “I felt I could deal with whatever comes”.

PTSD was measured with the PTSD Symptoms Scale. Sample items include “how often have you had repeated, disturbing, and unwanted memories of the stressful experience?” and “how often have you been feeling very upset when something reminded you of the stressful experience?”

Burnout was assessed with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI measures three dimensions of burnout: *Exhaustion* (“I feel burned out from my work”, “I feel used up at the end of the workday” and “I feel like I’m at the end of my rope”), *Depersonalization* (“I’ve become more callous toward people since I took this job”, “I don’t really care what happens to some of my patients/the people I work with” and “I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally), and *Personal Achievement* (“I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job”, “I feel I’m positively influencing other people’s lives through my work”, and “I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with the people I work with”).

Anxiety was measured with the 7-item Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale. Items ask participants to report on the frequency of thoughts and behaviours, for example, “not being able to stop or control worrying” or “becoming easily annoyed or irritable”.

PARTICIPANTS

Overall, the majority of participants were white women with ages relatively even split between 30-49 and 50 to 64. A more detailed breakdown of demographics by cohort is described below:

May Cohort: 64 participants completed the post-training survey. 97% of participants identified as women. 51% of participants were between 30-49 years old, 38% were between 50-64 years old, and 10% were between 19-29 years old. In terms of ethnicity, participants were predominately white (84%). The ethnic makeup of participants was otherwise as follows: 7.4% Asian, 1% Black, 1% Middle Eastern and 6% Other or preferred not to say.

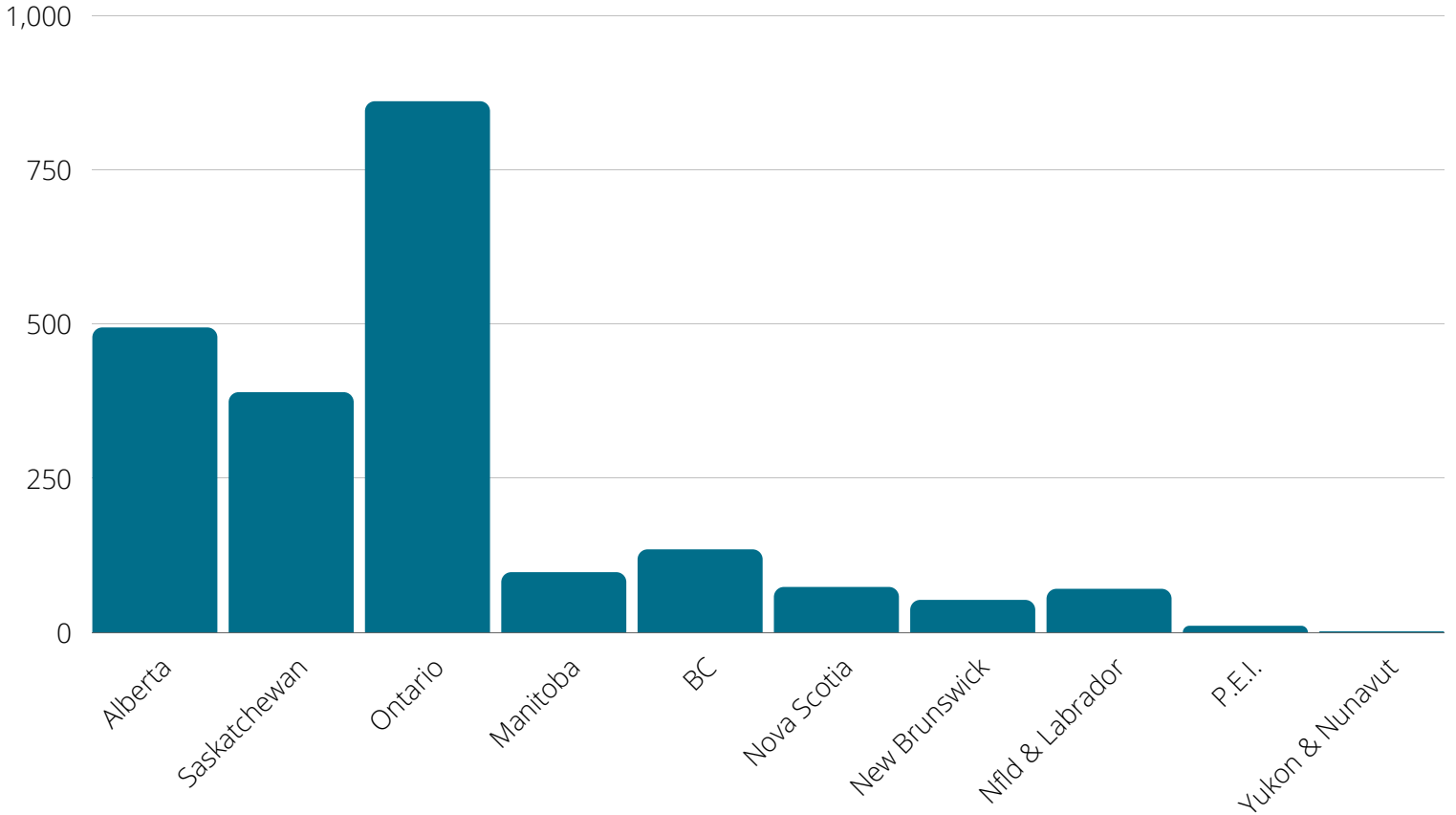
July Cohort: 67 participants completed the pre-and post-training survey. 92.5% of participants were women, 6% were men and 1 person preferred not to say. In terms of ethnicity, 83.6% identified as White, 4.5% as Black, 1.5% as Indigenous; 7.5% as Asian, and 3.0% preferred not to say. 4.5% of participants were between 19 and 29 years old while the majority were split between people 30-49 and 50-64 years old (47.8%).

December Cohort: 81 participants completed the pre-and post-training survey. 88.9% of participants identified as white, 7.5% as Asian, 1.2% as Hispanic, and 2.4% preferred not to say. 95.1% of participants were women, 3.7% were men, and 1 person preferred not to say. 2.4% were between 19-29 years old, 51.85 were between 30-49 years old, 38.3% were between 50-64, and 7.4% were 65 years old and older.

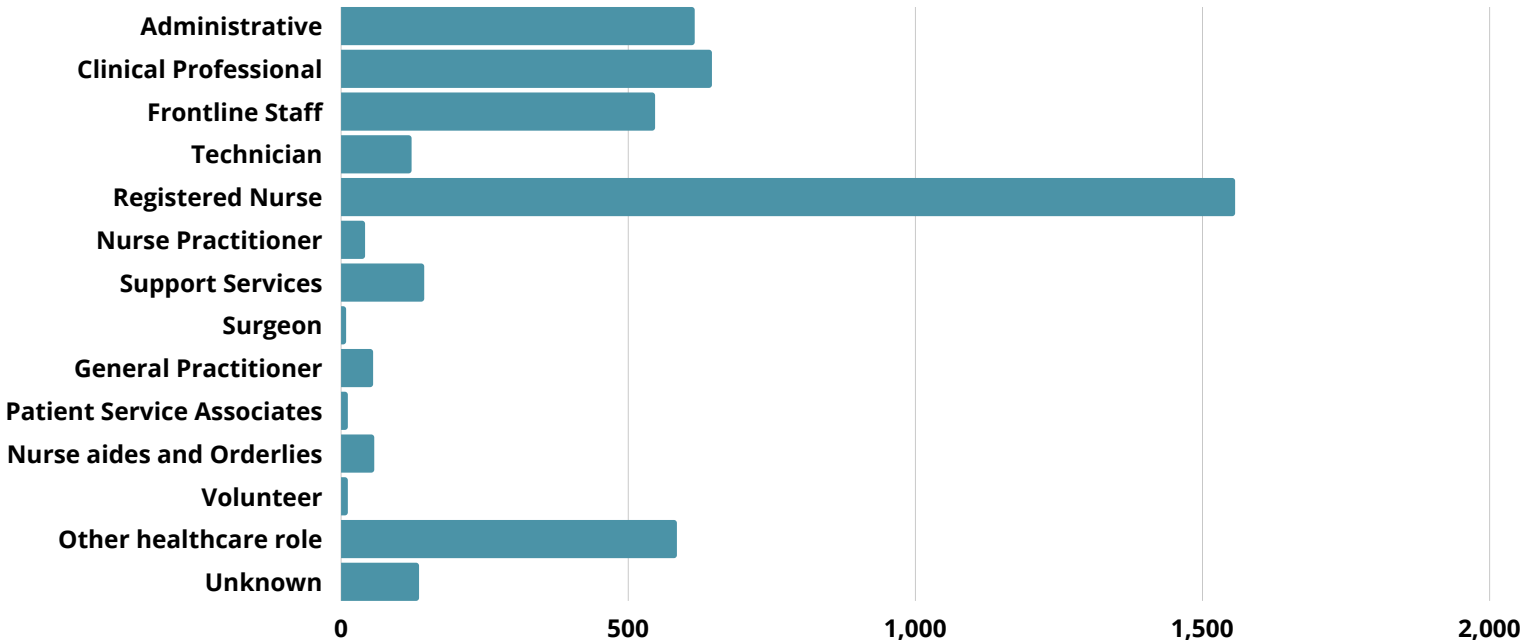
March Cohort: 66 participants completed the pre-and post-training survey. 88.8% of participants identified as white, 3% as Asian, 3% as Indigenous, 3% as Black, 1.5% as as Hispanic, 1.5% as Other, and 6% preferred not to say. 92.4% of participants were women, 7.6% were men, and no one identified in any other gender identification category. 7.5% were between 19-29 years old, 54.5 were between 30-49 years old, 34.8% were between 50-64, and 3% were 65 years old and older.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants by province/territory for cohorts 3 & 4. Data was not collected for cohorts 1 & 2.

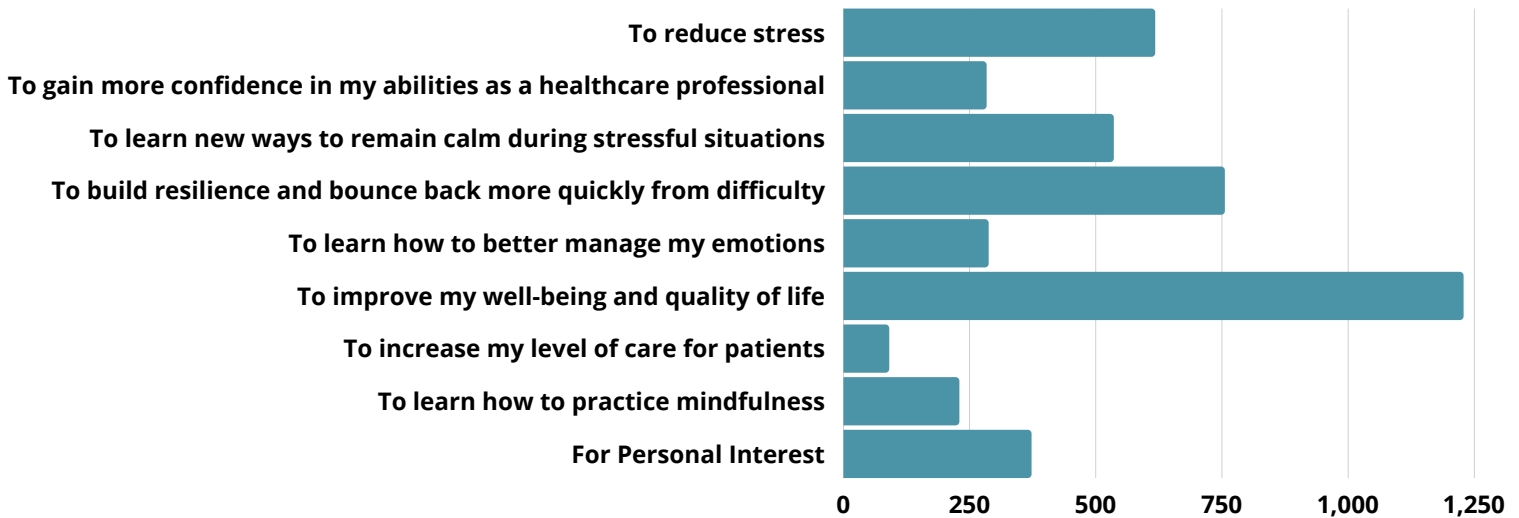


Participants by profession across all 4 cohorts



INTENTION

Past research has shown that intention impacts commitment, engagement and efficacy. Participants taking this training were asked why they wanted to join the training. The figure below shows the varying reasons for registration provided by participants across all 4 cohorts.



INTERVENTION

Each week of MindWell for Healthcare Workers includes approximately 10-15 minutes of learning content plus one 45-minute live session offered several times a week to fit most schedules. Sample topics include recognizing stress responses in the body, self-compassion, managing burnout, and finding purpose at work. The training revolves around a foundational practice called Take 5 where participants are taught a technique that brings attention to the senses and the breath in a short or extended period of time as needed.

INTERVENTION ENGAGEMENT

On average, participants in the May cohort engaged in 3.0 weeks, the July cohort engaged in 3.36 weeks, the December cohort engaged in 3.21 weeks, and the March cohort engaged in 3.53 weeks out of the 4 weeks of training content.

Results

INTERVENTION ENGAGEMENT CONT'D

Participants were encouraged to attend a weekly live lab as part of their training and post-training data showed that participants in the May cohort engaged in 1.36 labs per program, the July cohort engaged in 2.63 labs, the December cohort engaged in 2.26 labs and the March cohort engaged in 1.22 labs per program.

Out of 8 modules, July participants completed 5.1 modules and logged in just under 10 times; the average December participant completed 4.68 modules and logged in just under 10 times; and in 2022, March participants completed 6.2 modules and logged in just under 11.5 times. The number of completed modules and log in data was not collected for the May cohort.

A summary of these engagement statistics is presented below.

Cohort	N Participants	Weekly Engagement (rating out of 4)	Labs per Program	Modules	Number of Logins
May 2021	64	3.0	1.36	N/A	N/A
July 2021	67	3.25	2.63	5.1	9.6
December 2021	81	3.21	2.26	4.68	9.8
March 2022	66	3.53	1.22	6.2	11.5
Totals	278	3.24	1.86	5.32	10.3

Results

INTERVENTION RESULTS

Results were analyzed in SPSS using a repeated measures general linear model.

Variable	Change	Time 1 Mean	Time 2 Mean	Significant
Mindfulness	Increase	3.27	3.37	Yes
Resilience	Increase	3.40	3.65	Yes
PTSD	Decrease	2.56	2.25	Yes
Burnout	Decrease	3.12	2.97	Yes
Depersonalization	Decrease	2.02	1.87	Yes
Exhaustion	Decrease	3.62	3.14	Yes
Personal Achievement	Increase	3.72	3.85	No
Anxiety	Decrease	2.63	2.2	Yes

TRAINING FEEDBACK

A weekly survey was embedded into the online delivery of the program. Participants were asked to respond to questions out of a 5 star rating, where 0 is low and 5 is high. This survey had a total of 611 respondents made up of both program and research participants.

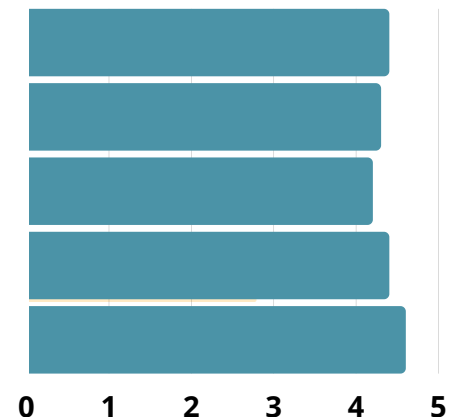
Overall, how satisfied are you with the course content?

Did learning in this course benefit your mental health and wellbeing?

Did learning in this course improve the way you handle stress?

Rate the user experience navigating course material, Labs, & site.

How likely are you to recommend this program to colleagues?



TRAINING FEEDBACK - LIVE LABS

Participants noted the value of Live Labs in offering community, connection, and in reminding them that they were not alone. Sample quotations are below.

"I had an especially stressful meeting with several senior leadership staff. The Lab I participated in was directly after this meeting which allowed me to relax and leave the stress behind in order to refocus on the positive."

The Labs have helped to alleviate stress and overcome feelings of wanting to give up on my career."

The encouragement to provide comments and to express your feelings is so nice. We don't often get to do that outside of these sessions.

"The online content is helpful but the lab is my favourite part. It's helpful to share a common experience with the other participants."

"I love hearing from others and love Barb's cadence and shares. Instead of judging myself when observing thoughts, I want to be as curious and kind as Barb to myself."

I like the labs because I get to hear from others who are going through the same things I am and it validates that the struggles that I am experiencing are normal. Also, the hosts are very good at keeping me on track on this mindful journey, so that it will soon become part of my routines. Very happy!

APPLICATION OF TRAINING FEEDBACK

Participants described how training was transferred into work and life. Participants noted a number of applications, including less stress at work and greater ability to manage their emotions. Excerpts from participants are below.

"When rushed by coworkers, I remembered to Take 5. I took a deep breath, felt my feet on the ground, felt my feet on the ground, felt my heart racing, and focused on just one thing at a time. By doing this I was able to let go of some of the built up tension and pain."

"Great suggestion to Take 5 when putting on PPE- I never thought to do it then, but it immediately improved my breathing and focus for the next task."

"I integrated Take 5 during a difficult conversation that I had with a colleague. It helped me stay calm throughout the conversation, and allowed me to respond in an effective and reasonable manner."

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APPLICATION OF TRAINING FEEDBACK CONT'D

"I'm noticing that instead of overreacting to unpleasant situations or comments, I'm becoming much more reflective and processing my thoughts and emotions (positive or negative) in a calm and patient manner."

"Before stepping into the office, I remember to Take 5. I find that this helps me stay calm, positive, and resilient when faced with any type of situation."

"I've written out the basic steps of the take 5 program on my mirror at home. It reminds me to follow the path."

"This course is worth the 10-20 minutes a day you spend on it. It reminds you to check yourself and that you are the only person in control of your emotions and how you choose to react."

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

"The structure was great - it is not too time consuming, it is simple, easy to digest and helps keep me accountable to the practice of mindfulness and compassion."

"It helps keep me accountable to my practice, and gives me an extra boost and the opportunity to do a mindfulness practice with the group. I love it!"

"Integrated take 5 into my shift at work today as I am returning from a few days away and was noticing signs of being overwhelmed. I took 5 and stocked a few items while thinking through the steps as this is a relaxing task/keeps me sharp and focused."

"It is allowing me time to reset, to turn everything else off and give myself permission to focus on me. Through this practice, I am finding my way back to where I was, in the before time. Before COVID, before redeployment, before feeling a little lost. Thank you for the tools to remember that I am a good nurse, I have lots to offer my patients. I will get through this."

"I have made a commitment to incorporate more short bursts of exercise into my mostly sedentary, office type work."

"After a stressful interaction with a patient, my take 5 defused my anxiety and made me more relaxed and present."

Conclusion and Implications

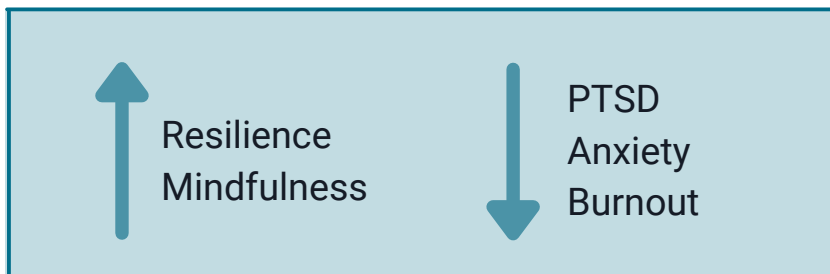


A cycle of excessive overtime and unsustainable workloads, with widespread verbal and physical violence, have led to a decline in nurses' health, including nurses' mental health. With a growing nurse shortage evident in many parts of the country, and further nurse shortages on the horizon, this situation is likely to worsen.

Linda Silas, RN, BScN, President of CFNU

Mental Disorders Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada Report, 2020

Healthcare workers registered in the 4-week training were invited to participate in a research study evaluating changes in participant levels of mindfulness, resilience, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), exhaustion, and anxiety before and after training. Despite the context of working amidst the conditions of COVID-19 where the majority of healthcare workers reported declining mental health, in just 4 weeks participants who engaged in the training increased their levels of mindfulness and resilience while PTSD, burnout, and anxiety decreased over time.



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Conclusion and Implications

4,675 participants have gone through the *MindWell for Healthcare Workers* program in four offerings of the program in May, July, December 2021 and March 2022. The results outlined in this report show the positive effect this brief online training can have for a diverse group of healthcare workers from nurses, to administration staff, doctors, front line staff and beyond.

This training has the potential to have a significant impact on the well-being of healthcare workers and in turn the healthcare system as a whole. The Canadian Federation of Nurses Union (CFNU) alone has over 200,000 members, and according to the *Mental Disorders Symptoms Among Nurses in Canada* report, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in three nurses struggle with symptoms of major depressive disorder and one in four screen positive for Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Even during the added stress of COVID-19 this year, those who participated in the 4-week MindWell program showed considerable positive changes in their mental health.

1 in 3 nurses struggle with symptoms of major depressive disorder

1 in 4 nurses screen positive for Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Results of this study can be utilized for increasing awareness and utilization of any future offerings to reach large numbers of healthcare workers around the globe.

MindWell for Healthcare Workers has shown promising results for being an effective online training program that can readily and cost effectively reach and support thousands of healthcare workers and help to address both an acute and chronic problem facing our healthcare systems.



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