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Pythagorean Self-awareness for Stress Management, Memory Improvement and Sense of Well-being in Mild Cognitive Impairment: A Pilot Study.

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Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) may signify the emergence of future neurodegenerative disease and dementia. Early detection of MCI might allow patients to take preventive measures, which may delay the progression of diseases. Research on preventive measures for dementia is still in its infancy. The primary aim of this study was to investigate the efficacy of a newly introduced program on cognitive functioning of patients with MCI. A sample of 36 patients with MCI was randomized to receive either an 8-week intervention or standardized care. The program, called "Pythagorean Self-awareness for Stress Management, Memory Improvement and Sense of Well-being", was based on Pythagorean philosophy. This was an individually practiced, mental process (performed twice per day) which had three stages: sequential recall of daily events, primary contemplation on thoughts-emotions related to each event and the critical appraisal of the individual's attitude. Measurements of cognitive function, stress, depression, anxiety and self-efficacy were

performed using standardized questionnaires. Global cognitive function (Mini-Mental Status Examination test), memory (Five Word test), processing speed (Symbol Digit Modality test), and visuospatial memory (Brief Visuospatial Memory test). We found significant improvements in the intervention group compared to the control group ($p < 0.05$). The effect sizes were large (effect size $r > 0.5$). Significant improvements were also found for depression, stress, anxiety and self-efficacy ($p < 0.05$, effect sizes > 0.5). This study suggests that this program could enhance cognition and improve affect and self-efficacy in MCI patients. Future research should be performed to confirm these results and hopefully provide a novel non-pharmacologic prevention tool for dementia.

Biography

Dr. Christina Darviri is Professor of Prevention and Health Promotion. Since 2008, she has been serving as the co-Scientific director with professor G. Chrousos of the MSc/PhD Program entitled "The Science of Stress and Health Promotion" at the Medical School of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece.

She lectures on stress-related nosology, lifestyle and stress, efficient stress management and the overall connection between stress and health promotion. She has published over 100 peer-reviewed articles in the field of stress. She has also supervised over 100 theses on stress, health and disease and published many books.

She has been the principal investigator of many research projects, focusing on issues such as healthy longevity and how life style impacts stress resilience, as well as how to effectively auto regulate hypertension through stress management and health promotion. Her latest scientific project is a technique called "Pythagorean Self-awareness for Stress Management, Memory Improvement and Sense of Well-being".