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UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF MEDITATIVE HOMEWORK ON DEPRESSION IN THE CONTEXT OF MINDFULNESS BASED COGNITIVE THERAPY (MBCT): AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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NICE guidelines indicate one in five people will suffer from depression at some point in their lives with relapse rates of 50 - 80% in those who have experienced one or more episodes of depression (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence [NICE], 2007). By 2020, depression is predicted to be the second largest cause of death or disability and consequently there is a need to explore and develop the ways of working with depression. Mindfulness based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is a group psycho-educational treatment designed to reduce the risk of recurrent depression by integrating mindfulness based meditation practices with cognitive therapy techniques (Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002). MBCT comprises eight weekly two-hour group sessions with additional time for meditative homework practice. As yet, little is known about how patients experience meditative homework assignments in a UK public health setting. This study examines subjective accounts of the meaning of carrying out meditative homework assignments in terms of impact on the self as well as an exploration of barriers and facilitating factors from a participant's perspective. Six Individual in-depth interviews were conducted, transcribed verbatim and an Interpretative Phenomenological Approach was used to analyse the data. Results focus on perceived facilitating factors and difficulties experienced in carrying out meditative homework as well as implications for clinical practice in the prevention of recurrent depression. Transformation of participant's experience of the self and social relatedness as a consequence of meditative homework is discussed in relation to existing psychological literature and the practise of MBCT.