# Studies Raise Concerns Over Mental Health Interventions in Schools



Recent studies have raised concerns about the potential negative impacts of extensive mental health interventions in schools, particularly those involving mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral training. Researchers in the UK and Australia noted unexpected results where students involved in mental health training did not show improvements over their peers, and in some cases, their mental health deteriorated. These findings were highlighted in the MYRIAD study conducted in British classrooms over eight years, involving 28,000 teenagers, which concluded that mindfulness training did not enhance student mental health as hypothesized.

Lucy Foulkes, a research psychologist from the University of Oxford, has suggested a need for caution in implementing large-scale mental health interventions in school systems. She and her colleague Jack Andrews have coined the term "prevalence inflation" to describe an increase in reported mild or transient mental health symptoms, partially attributed to awareness campaigns. Foulkes has emphasized the potential for such interventions to make teenagers perceive themselves as more vulnerable than they might actually be, possibly leading to adverse effects.

Despite these concerns, many in the field continue to highlight the urgent need for access to treatment, as large numbers of young people, especially in the United States, remain untreated for severe depression. Mental Health America notes that about 60% of US youths with severe depression do not receive any mental health services. This urgent problem contrasts with the views of researchers like Foulkes and Andrews, who advocate a more measured approach to mental health programs in schools, suggesting that sometimes, inaction might be preferable to potentially harmful interventions.