



Yoga Therapy for the Adjunctive Treatment of Multiple Sclerosis



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Introduction

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic autoimmune inflammatory illness of the central nervous system. (Sadiq, 2005; Noseworthy et al, 2000) There are over 2.3 million people sufferers worldwide. MS is associated with fatigue, reduced mobility, cognitive impairment, depression and emotional lability. (Compston et al, 2008) It is the leading cause of disability in young adults. (Noseworthy et al, 2000; Compston et al, 2008) It has no cure and therapy is focused on managing symptoms, slowing the progress of the disease, and speeding recovery. Many complementary modalities have been tried to positively modify this disease. (Yadav et al, 2014) Yoga appears to have several beneficial effects on many MS related symptoms. (Cramer et al, 2014)

Methods

A comprehensive search of PubMed on 'yoga and multiple sclerosis' revealed 56 citations dating back to 1994. PMC query on the same topic revealed 437 full length articles. Other contemporary and complementary medicine databases were also queried and relevant publications were consulted.

Results

Yoga therapy has been studied in patients with MS. (Frank et al, 2015; Ahmadi et al, 2013) Yoga therapy improves balance, (de Oliveira et al, 2016) pain, (Hasanpour, 2016) fatigue, (Guner et al, 2014) and quality of life in patients with MS. (Salgado et al, 2013) Cognitive impairment may show improvement with yoga therapy. (Bhargav et al, 2016) Yoga also improves mood in these patients. (Ensari et al, 2016) In one study, yoga improved social function, energy, mental status and overall hygiene in patients with MS. (Hasanpour, 2016) Step length and walking speed is improved. (Guner et al, 2014) There are improvements noted in neurogenic bladder dysfunction. (Patil et al, 2012) Sexual function improves and there is greater sexual satisfaction. (Najafidoulatabad et al, 2014) Yoga therapy also helps promote social functioning and decreases stress and brings anxiety relief in these patients. (Hasanpour-Dehkordi et al, 2016) However, no benefit has been noted with yoga on spasticity suffered by patients with multiple sclerosis. (Velikonja et al, 2010)

Conclusions

Multiple sclerosis is a disabling disease with no cure. Yoga therapy offers several benefits in patients with this disease, when used as a supplement to psychotherapy. Besides being safe and inexpensive, and without drug interactions, it may be more accessible for patients with spasticity and impaired mobility than other forms of exercise. Yogic exercises should be offered to patients with MS.

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