Medical yoga for patients with stress-related symptoms in primary health care

Köhn M.1, Persson Lundholm U.1, Bryngelsson I.-L.2, Anderzén-Carlsson A.3,4, Westerdahl E.3,4
1Nora Health Care Centre, Region Örebro County, Nora, Sweden, 2Department of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Örebro University Hospital, Örebro, Sweden, 3Centre for Health Care Sciences, Örebro University Hospital, Örebro, Sweden, 4Faculty of Medicine and Health, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden

Introduction
An increasing number of patients suffer from stress-related symptoms and diagnoses and many seek help in primary health care. Medical yoga has been introduced in clinical settings to reduce stress. No studies have investigated the effects of Medical yoga in primary health care setting.

Purpose
To evaluate Medical yoga treatment in patients with stress-related symptoms and diagnoses in primary health care. A secondary aim was to explore the meaning of participating in the Medical yoga.

Methods
Two study designs were used:
• A randomized, controlled study with 37 participants from a primary health care centre in Sweden was performed.
  - The Control group: Standard care.
  - The Yoga group: Medical yoga for 1 hour, once a week, over a 12-week period in addition to the standard care.
  Outcomes were measured before and after 12 weeks:
    - Perceived Stress Scale
    - Shirom-Melamed Burnout Questionnaire
    - Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale
    - Insomnia Severity Index
    - Pain by VAS
  - Overall health status by EQ-5D
• A qualitative interview study with a descriptive phenomenological design, was performed in six patients from the intervention group.

Results
Patients assigned to the Medical yoga group showed significantly greater improvements on measures of general stress level ($p<0.000$), anxiety ($p<0.019$) and overall health status ($p<0.018$) compared to controls.
For the interviewed persons the experience was that the medical yoga was not an endpoint of recovery but the start of a process towards an increased sense of wholeness.
It was described as a way of alleviating suffering and it provided the participants with a tool for dealing with their stress.

Conclusions
Medical yoga is effective in reducing levels of stress and anxiety in patients with stress-related symptoms.
Participants described a greater self-awareness and self-esteem, which in turn had an implicit impact on their life.

Recommendations
Medical yoga is effective and feasible in the primary health care setting and thus could be a valuable complement to conventional therapy in medical practice.

References

Acknowledgements
Financial support was provided by Research Committee, Örebro County Council, Örebro, Sweden and the Swedish Research Council, Sweden.

Contact details
monica.kohn@regionorebrolan.se
agneta.anderzen-karlsson@regionorebrolan.se
elisabeth.westerdahl@regionorebrolan.se