

ROLE OF YOGA IN CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Take care of your body; it's the only place you have to live.



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"I'm ever enthusiastic in taking part in seminars for paper presentation & various other competitions as poster making".

One of my recent paper presentation was on the topic - ayurvedic tools & strategies for longevity of life; online mode held by Parul Institute of Ayurveda.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRESS IN CURRENT COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CCOVID 19 pandemic and accompanying lockdown measures had turned work-life balance into upside down and placed the world at risk of an increased incidence of psychological distress and mental disorders like anxiety, fear, post-traumatic stress disorder.

When we are all bound to live a restricted life under the constant fear of infection risks, it is natural for anyone to develop anxiety. The continuous flow of negative news, the inadequacy of daily resources, everything adds to this growing anxiety and depression. Continuous anxiety or stress can manifest many health conditions such as high blood pressure, muscle tension, breathing issues, etc. These physiological alterations make us more vulnerable to viral infections. A growing body of evidence identifies stress as a cofactor in infectious disease susceptibility and

outcomes. It is widely accepted that stress, insomnia and anxiety can lead to a decrease in melatonin levels (a natural antioxidant) in the human body. Various studies have demonstrated that the melatonin level decreases with age. As a result, the elderly appear more prone to the COVID-19 infection.

Thus, increased melatonin levels may partially compensate for the age-related risk of COVID-19 infection. Further, it is pertinent to point out that the current lockdown has also adversely affected the daily schedule and sleep cycle, thus affecting the circadian rhythm with a bearing on the immune system.

Though prevention and management of these conditions are imperative, delivery of evidence-based in person psychotherapeutic interventions in person has been hampered due to lockdown, physical distancing and overburdened health care systems. The provision of these interventions via telecommunication has its limitations, like the lack of adequate training in tele- psychiatry.

Consequently, the burden of mental illness may remain unaddressed for specific populations if unproved with viable alternatives. This highlights the importance of self -regulatory mind-body interventions such as a

structured daily schedule and Yoga practice. Since the workplaces and hospitals are replete with continuous anxiety, stress and fear of infection and a restricted access to parks, gyms and swimming, an in-house Yoga practice provides a remedy to an inactive lifestyle and work from home, to live through this lockdown & current pandemic period.

ACCEPTANCE OF YOGA AS THE BEST NON-PHARMACOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE:

Yoga is one of the widely accepted and structured lifestyle practices which promote the integration between mind and body, man and nature, individual consciousness and universal consciousness.

Yoga is a multi-component discipline that includes three forms of practice, namely postures and physical exercises (Asana), breathing regulation techniques (Pranayama), and meditation-based (control of attention, dissociating oneself from the disturbing thought) activities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes Yoga as a valuable tool, one that increases physical activity, mental wellbeing, and decreases non-communicable diseases.

Since a lavish lifestyle further increases the risk of diseases like COVID-19, diabetes and hypertension, a cost effective non-pharmacological intervention such as Yoga can effectively reduce the risk of CVDs which consequently increases the risk of COVID-19 and related complications. Yoga can reduce the risk of cardiovascular diseases and COVID-19 by modulating weight, lipid profile, blood pressure and stress.

The stress hormones (such as cortisol) which compromise the immune system can be balanced through Yoga practice because of its inclusion of slow breathing practice which improves the lung capacity and respiratory health for optimal performance and wellness. In addition, it has been shown that Yoga assists in improving the blood circulation in order to supply the oxygenated blood to multiple organs for smooth optimal function

Yoga also helps to build up psycho-physiological health, emotional harmony; and manage daily stress and its consequences.

The posture and asanas of yoga help us to reduce muscle tension, joint issues and relax our sympathetic system, resulting in a relaxed mind & manages our blood pressure level.

There are a lot of yoga poses which help us to manage our blood pressure level and anxiety.

Several randomized Controlled studies have shown the efficacy of Yogic practices in management of non-communicable diseases like hypertension, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease (COPD), bronchial asthma, diabetes, sleep disorders, depression, obesity, etc. That can be comorbid conditions in patients with COVID 19.

ADVOCATION OF COMMON YOGA PROTOCOL:

The exacerbation of existing comorbid conditions and further deterioration in mental health can be addressed by work from home-adapted Yoga techniques by utilization of online portals and novel Yoga modules. 45 minute Common Yoga Protocol proposed by the Indian government for the International Yoga Day is recommended for this. It includes all the aspects of Yoga practice,

for instance postures (Asanas), breathing techniques (Pranayama) and meditation (Dhyana).

Some Yoga practices which are a part of the Common Yoga Protocol have been described to successfully decrease stress and anxiety levels, and

have presented other benefits as well. These practices include: Anuloma Viloma Pranayama (alternate nostril breathing), Bhramhari Pranayama and meditation. Practices like Kapalabhati (forceful exhalation by contracting the abdominal muscles) have been found useful to purify the frontal air sinuses and also aid to overcome cough disorders which maintains the health of respiratory tract and boosts immunity.

Along with the above-mentioned Yoga practices, certain Asanas, if practiced under supervision, have also been shown to relieve stress. This includes Shashankasana (hare posture), Bhujangasana (cobra posture), Makrasana (crocodile posture) and Setubandhasana (bridge posture).

Various online platforms, for example Yoga Scholars PGIMER on Facebook, are providing uninterrupted live sessions which focus on an interface between public and healthcare workers.

These sessions comprise experts from Yoga, science and spiritual fields to promote the philosophy of Yoga practice and to provide demonstrations of Yoga practices, seemingly helpful in anxiety and stress management. These online

platforms have been endorsed by the Ministry of AYUSH.

Yoga has shown to exert health promoting effects by influencing the neuro-psycho-immune capacity through the improvement of psychological balance. Therefore, the Common Yoga Protocol can be universally adopted as recourse to modify the lifestyle of every age group and to provide mental and physical health benefits during the pandemic outbreak. Thus, we can advocate it for risk reduction of COVID-19, as it may be useful for the enhancement of immunity and to combat anxiety, glucose, hypertension and stress induced by the pandemic.

CONCLUSION:

COVID-19 PANDEMIC has brought to our realisation that change is the only constant, today's lows can easily convert into tomorrow's highs – what counts is only how you take these in your stride.

By practicing yoga, we can promote values that inspire a peaceful, environmental stewardship for the betterment of society and the earth.

Just like a normal walk in the park or 30 minutes of hard-core gym exercising, Yoga brings its own flavour and benefits to the table,

which can be performed by people of all ages, and provides you with a holistic sense of health, which is especially required during these times.

It could also be

something you can motivate others in your family & social circle to do, as it

could help them get through these times easily, healthily & improves the bondage.

A Disease of any form persists only as long as we let it to persist. So practice Yoga which is a cost effective non-pharmacological intervention to combat this current pandemic.