

LETTERS

Use of Yoga in India During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Results of a Patient Based Survey

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Various prophylactic and treatment strategies have been tried during the COVID-19 pandemic. In India there are several traditional systems of medicine, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (currently regulated through the Ministry of Ayush in India), which are effectively utilized in delivering a holistic type of health care. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has issued proactive guidelines from time to time in line with the global approaches and national protocol to tackle this unprecedented pandemic, and the Ministry of Ayush (MoA) has issued guidelines for the prevention and management of COVID-19. The possibilities of using yoga and Ayurveda to prevent infection and as adjuvant to therapy have been reported.¹ In addition to prophylaxis and therapy, yoga and Ayurveda have been used successfully in the management of co-morbidities such as type 2 diabetes mellitus,² which were shown to negatively impact the outcome in COVID-19.³ During the pandemic there was also a need to help patients recover from post-COVID symptoms.⁴

In order to determine whether yoga practice was used chiefly for prophylaxis, as adjuvant therapy, to manage co-morbid conditions, to facilitate recovery post-COVID or as a combination of these possibilities a survey was carried out in a yoga therapy outpatient department between December 2021 and April, 2022.

Four hundred and eleven patients were recruited. The survey required patients to state if they had practiced yoga during the COVID-19 pandemic (Yes/No). Patients who responded 'yes' were asked if they intended yoga practice to help in prophylaxis, as adjuvant therapy, to manage co-morbid conditions, to facilitate recovery post-COVID or as a combination of these possibilities. There were 366 complete responses. Hence the response rate for the present survey was 89.05 percent. Patients were also asked to

mention their age, gender and illness. The percentages were determined.

Of the total respondents, (1) 68.0 percent respondents used yoga for prevention from COVID 19, (2) 1.37 percent used yoga for recovery from COVID 19 and (3) 5.19 percent for the management of other co-morbidities (e.g., type-2 diabetes, hypertension) during COVID 19 pandemic. The remaining 24.86 percent of the respondents used yoga for more than one reasons. The three most common combinations mentioned were: (1) prevention from COVID 19 along with management of other co-morbidities (11.0 percent; n = 40), (2) prevention from COVID 19, treatment of COVID 19 and recovery from COVID 19 (5.2 percent; n = 19) and (3) Prevention and treatment of COVID 19 (2.5 percent; n = 9).

Yoga practice was most often used as a prophylactic during the COVID 19 pandemic. This usage is in keeping with known benefits of yoga practice to ameliorate mental stress⁵ and optimize immune functioning.⁵

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