



NIMHANS Integrated Centre for Yoga

National Institute for Mental Health & Neurosciences, Bengaluru-29

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Integrating Yoga in clinical practice – A Psychiatrist’s impressions from professional experience



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YOGA as a way of life has been advocated from time immemorial. Today it is not just being advocated for better health, but also as therapy in clinical settings. This is especially true in the field of psychiatry, where yoga is being looked at as an effective complementary treatment to medications and even to Electro-Convulsive Shock (ECT) treatment, to help deal with negative symptoms, side-effects and in improving quality of life. A number of studies in the last decade have shown the efficacy of yoga in improving symptoms of schizophrenia, depression and even childhood related disorders etc. Though research is still in its nascent stage, with trials testing the efficacy of yoga in all disorders in psychiatry, I believe this is a significant step in the field of psychiatry

and its management of psychiatric disorders. My personal belief in the system of Yoga as a therapy has been strengthened by the upcoming research in the field of psychiatry.

From my professional diaries!!!

My conviction about Yoga as an effective complementary treatment for psychiatric disorders stems from my experiences of using the same during my days as a resident in PGIMER, Chandigarh, where I was part of an ongoing Yoga project. My ‘clinical’ mind was always interested in integrating our Indian systems of treatment with standard care to help improve the lives of the ‘patients’. I realized through my research that the benefits of ‘YOGA’ in some form or the other, aid overall clinical improvement in our patients. To substantiate my belief, I started using yoga in group format comprising of meditation (dhyana), Yogasanas, Pranayama and observed qualitative improvement in the clinical symptoms of my patients.

In early 90’s I started experimenting with ‘YOGA NIDRA’ and ‘Chitakastha dharana’ to help manage the anxiety and depressive symptoms in head and neck cancer patients. The results of the study showed that the ‘Yoga Nidra’ group had lesser anxiety, depression scores and tolerated chemotherapy or radio therapy better. I also got similar results when I tested the effects of Yoga for patients’ post stroke therapy.

With pronounced efficacy of yoga observed in all the above trials where I was involved, I introduced Yoga as Therapy in ‘Asha Hospital’ Hyderabad, where regular

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yogasanas and pranayama were taught to patients of various psychiatric disorders. This routine was observed for both out patients and also for those admitted in the Asha Rehabilitation Centre. As an avid yogasana and pranayama practitioner, I believe that yoga can be integrated into one's lifestyle if practiced regularly. The challenge is that most patients need external motivation to continue yoga practice. However, yoga works only if continued on a regular basis for a long period of time. However this scenario may not be true in the field of psychiatry, where we can draw parallels between the challenges in administering medication and yoga for patients with psychiatric disorders. Both yoga and meditation in psychiatry need to be taken/practiced for long periods of time to observe any beneficial effects in the symptoms of patients. The only difference possibly is that one needs to practice a minimum of 30 minutes of yoga per day (which requires one to schedule one's day) for beneficial effects; whereas taking medications could be completed in a few seconds. Further, psychiatric patients who lack insight could be non-compliant to medications and those people who do not have insight about the positive effects that yoga could bring would be the first to drop out of yoga practice. The challenge in management of psychiatric disorders is in developing the insight that medications/ yoga is beneficial for treating the disorder. Once the management plan (whether yoga or medications) is integrated into the patient's life, it becomes a routine and an 'Internal Locus of Control' behaviour.

The challenge is to present yoga as an acceptable, affordable, accessible and easy to use management therapy to patients and professionals in the field of psychiatry to be considered on par with other standard care techniques. For this, brief yoga modules (or specific yoga practices) need to be tested for its efficacy for specific symptoms. Technology also could be leveraged to advocate integration of 'YOGA' in the day to day clinical practice in the district hospitals.

As the President of Indian Psychiatric Society, I thus feel necessitated by my experience to have a task force and speciality section, on Yoga for the next two years. I envision that this task force would open new 'vistas' in the evidence of yoga for psychiatric disorders and prescribe appropriate guidelines. I am particularly happy that the NIMHANS Integrated Centre for Yoga (NICY) has been doing pioneering research in the area of Yoga and Psychiatry especially from the angle of Neurobiology of YOGA, which is a significant step towards integration of yoga practice in day to day clinical management and practice. As the President of the Indian Psychiatric Society, I take this pledge along with my team to join hands in integrating yoga into clinical practice in the field of psychiatry.

Ayurveda and Mental Health

Ayurveda, as a system of medicine, aims at preventive and therapeutic management of diseases and the patient as a whole. WHO defines Health as a state of complete Physical, Mental and Social wellbeing and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity. Ayurveda goes one step ahead in defining the health by including the Spiritual harmony for complete health -

***Samadoṣa samāgnisca samadhātu malakriyāha,
Prasannātmendriya manāh svastha ityabhidheeyate.***



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Ayurveda postulates the fundamental theory that mental faculty (manas/mind and buddhi/intellect) is one of the four components of life viz shareera (physical body), indriyas (five senses), satva (mind) and atma (consciousness). Manas is considered as one of the nine basic substances (karana dravya) responsible for creation of all the living beings. It is an inherent companion of individual consciousness - atma from the time of fertilization to the final departure. Manas is dynamic and active, it is driven by stimuli or orders received from consciousness (chetana). It has two important qualities namely: atomic in size (anutva) and oneness (ekatwa) in operation. It means, its size is micro and invisible and performs only one task in a given time, but it looks as if it is multitasking. It controls the functions of senses (sensory and motor) and the self. It is located in the heart, the abode of consciousness, but has an all pervading influence throughout the body and beyond. The manas operates in two planes viz chitta (cognitive mind) and buddhi (decisive mind). The main functions of manas are chinthya-thinking, vicharya-discrimination, uhya-guessing, dheya-aiming, sankalpa-determination and adhyavasaya-differentiation.

The mind has three major roles to play in its functioning, namely 1) Dhee-intellect, the power of quick grasping and discrimination 2) Dhrithi- the power of retention, inhibition and self-restraint 3) Smriti- the power of recollection, memory.

During the journey of life, mind functions due to its three qualities viz satva, rajas and tamas. Satva guna is responsible for the harmonious functioning of rajas and tamas and for all the positive and righteous functioning of the mind. Rajas is responsible for all the dynamic and active functions. Tamas is responsible for countering the functions of rajas, similar to the relationship of sympathetic and parasympathetic systems. There is a close

relationship and interdependence between the physiological functional entities (tridoshas) and psychological entities (trigunas) – satva guna with pitta, tamo guna with kapha and rajo guna with vayu.

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... Imbalance of these physical and mental functional entities leads to the onset of somatic, psychosomatic and psychiatric disorders.

The harmonious state of satva, rajas and tamas leads to mental health and equilibrium of vata, pitta and kapha leads to physical health. Total health therefore is a harmonious state of both physical and mental functional entities. The balance and imbalance of these factors depend upon proper and improper life style practices. The life style includes focus on ahara – food & drink, vihara – practices & habits, and vichara – thoughts. Excessive usage – atiyoga, less or no usage – heenayoga and mis-usage – mithyayoga of sensory or motor systems and thoughts leads to improper life style and their harmonious usage leads to proper lifestyle.

Imbalance of these physical and mental functional entities leads to the onset of somatic, psychosomatic and psychiatric disorders. According to Ayurveda, as there is a concomitant relationship and interdependence between body and mind, any imbalance or disorder is essentially a psychosomatic disorder and there can be no ease/comfort and dis-ease/discomfort without the involvement of mind. The mental and behaviour disturbances are due to the vitiation of rajas and tamas which are inherited with their nature of causing disturbance/vitiation.

Ayurveda recognises two types of urges (vegas) known as physical (shareerika) like hunger, thirst, sleep, defecation, urination, sneezing and mental (manasika) urges namely kama (desire), krodha (anger), lobha (greed), moha (attachment), mada (ego), matsarya (jealousy). In order to maintain the harmony of functional entities – tridoshas, the physical urges should never be suppressed, and to maintain the harmony of mental faculties, the mental urges should be controlled and should not be left free and uncontrolled. Diseases are manifested in the system due to suppression of urges which should not be suppressed and non-controlling of the urges which should be controlled. Controlling of manasika vegas plays an important role with regards to mental health from the view point of Ayurveda. These manasika vegas gradually lead to serious mental disorders like unmada (hysteria), vishada (depression), bhaya (anxiety).

To control kama and lobha one should know the strength and limitations of oneself and follow the lifestyle and the line of treatment recommended for vata. To control krodha, mada and matsarya, one should slow down the breath through different breath regulation techniques and practise meditation and follow the line of treatment and life style of pitta. To overcome moha one should practice the life style and the line of treatment recommended for kapha.

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The main objective of the therapeutic management of mental disorders is to correct the imbalance of satva, rajas and tamas through proper lifestyle (ahara, vihara & vichara), biocleansing & detoxification therapies (panchakarma), administration of herbal formulations with medhya karma (a pharmacological action which regulates, balances and rejuvenates the functions of the mind including the brain), counselling, spiritual discourses, non-suppression of manasika vegas (psychological urges), ancillary panchakarma therapies such as shiroabhyanga, shiropichu, shrodhara and shirobasti. Use of herbs like brahmi, shankhapushpi, jatamansi, sarpagandha, vacha, thagaru, agaru have been recommended and found to be effective in several research publications.

In conclusion, Ayurveda recommends understanding of the status of trigunas and maintaining their harmony through knowledge, courage and spiritual practices to prevent and overcome mental disorders and maintain mental health.

Dhee dhairya ātmādi vignānam manodośaousādham param |.

In the present day, when one particular system of medical science is not able to provide a viable solution for the management of NCD's and psychiatric disorders, and when there are effective alternative concepts and effective therapeutic procedures in other systems, it is imperative to evolve an integrative protocol for the management of mental health. In this regard Ayurveda can contribute immensely for the management of mental and total health.

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Feedback from an International trainee at NICY



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The Integrated Centre for Yoga at NIMHANS offers yoga therapy for a wide range of patients inside and outside its premises. Sessions are specifically tailored to meet treatment's demands. In fact, yoga sessions are based on yoga modules that have been approved by the scientific community as being valuable tools for rehabilitation and therapy. For example, modules are designed for patients with schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and ADHD.

Yoga sessions

New patients follow individual classes until they are ready and feel comfortable to join the group sessions. Most patients arrive on time and follow the entire session. Classes generally happen in a fluid manner. If an issue arises, the yoga therapist handles the situation very quickly and with professionalism. Many improvements are observed in patients, even after a few sessions. They seem more stable, they remember the asanas and are able to name them. Patients have even commented on how the session makes them feel more relaxed, that they are looking forward to it and that they definitely feel a change since the yoga treatment. However, these changes could also be influenced by medication.

Sometimes, when therapists are absent or when patients are more in number, sessions are video-screened in the yoga hall. Most of the patients follow the video instructions carefully and perform the asanas accordingly. This new method is definitely an efficient way to give the session and it also allows more patients to follow the yoga treatment. At the end of a rehabilitative or treatment period at NIMHANS, patients can take the video session back home to ensure the continuity of their practice.

Centre Organization

On the administrative and organizational side, the Integrated Centre for Yoga does a very good job. Therapists have a record of new and old patients attending the class. This allows the Centre to keep track of the flow of patients for its weekly and monthly statistics. Moreover, this ensures that each patient attends enough number of sessions as advised by their doctor.

The yoga team is very effective and communicates well with each other. Meetings are held every week to discuss the new advancement of the Centre and other

important matters. Similarly, each week classes are given to the staff in Research Method or Psychiatry. This is definitely beneficial as it reminds the team on how to go about in research and keeps everyone updated on psychiatric conditions and new discoveries. Finally, the Centre communicates well with every department on campus, which allows patients from every unit to benefit from yoga treatment.

Activities to increase Yoga Awareness

The Yoga Centre dedicates also a lot of its time to raise yoga awareness on campus. As part of the International Day of Yoga, it took the initiative to organize one mass yoga session per month. It is a way to make it more available to the people working at NIMHANS and it allows students, staffs, doctors, patients, and caregivers to know what is being offered at the Yoga Centre. These mass yoga sessions vary each month; they can be asana based, pranayama classes, suryanamaskar focused, etc. They try to make it diverse so that people on campus can taste what yoga offers on different dimensions. Sessions are usually followed by almond milk time, which allows everyone to connect, share their experience and ask questions. It is a very nice time and people appreciate it a lot! Moreover, for the International Yoga Day on the 21st of June, the Centre dedicated an entire week of yoga-focused activities. Movie, quiz, sattvik (yogic) diet at the canteen, yoga competition for caregivers and patients, mass yoga sessions, etc. It went fabulously well and more than 700 people came for the Mass yoga session!

The Yoga Centre also organizes lectures for Psychology students, as well as guest lectures, in order to raise their awareness on the role of yoga in mental health. Furthermore, the Integrated Center for Yoga organizes periodically a one month appreciation course for students and staff. The training explores the basics of Hatha yoga and allows trainees to understand yoga more fully and to practice it regularly. Finally, the Centre puts a lot of emphasis on developing new yoga research and collaborate with a team of researchers inside and outside the campus – nationally and internationally. This has allowed the institute to release a number of publications and enabled the yoga therapy to be seen as a valuable treatment in the clinical and health community.

Conclusion

It is such a great initiative to have implemented a Yoga Centre in the governmental institution that is NIMHANS. The Integrated Centre for Yoga has enabled the development of new avenues for treatment. Moreover, it also helps patients from a range of conditions to feel better and offers a different hygiene of life. Finally, and most of it all, the Centre dedicates a lot of its time in raising awareness in the population inside and outside NIMHANS about what is available besides allopathic treatment.

NICY ACTIVITIES

Release of Special Edition of “*Samatvan*”

A special edition of our quarterly journal “*Samatvan*” covering all activities of 2nd International Day of Yoga (IDY 2016) was released by Secretary, Dept of Health and Family welfare, Govt of India on 29th July 2016 at New Delhi.



Yoga Appreciation Course. 1st – 31st July 2016.



One month yoga course was conducted for staff and students of NIMHANS in the month of July 2016, which was attended by 15 staff and students. A certificate of participation was provided at the end of the course to all the regular participants.

21st July 2016 and 20th August 2016 “Mass Yoga Practice”

After the celebration of 2nd International Day of Yoga on 21st June 2016, enthusiasts from different associations from NIMHANS came forward to practice ‘Common Yoga Protocol’ around the 21st of every month. In view of this a common yoga session was organised on 21st July 2016 at 7am in Ashwini Hall and 20th August, 2016 in NIMHANS Gymkhana. All the NIMHANS staff came together to practice the common yoga protocol on that day. Nearly 150 staff and students attended the session. We have also started weekly one hour yoga session for staff and students of NIMHANS and planning to expand to twice weekly.



25th September 2016. “World Alzheimer’s Day”

World Alzheimer’s day was observed on 25th September 2016. A mass yoga session for elderly people, including those with Alzheimer’s disease was conducted at Cubbon Park, Bangalore. Around 25 people attended the session. This Program was jointly hosted by

Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI), Bangalore chapter, NIMHANS and Nightingales Medical Trust.

Basics of Yoga Therapy and Philosophy for International Students at NICY.

In the monthly workshops conducted by the Department of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS for international Sri Lanka Youth Volunteer Organization (SLV) students from social work, psychology, mental health nursing and other allied disciplines in mental health, a one hour orientation session on "Yoga for mental health prevention and promotion: Evidence based community interventions" was provided by Dr Aarti Jagannathan, Assistant Professor of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS on 26th July, 9th August, 7th September, 4th October 2016 at NICY. They were also shown around the centre and explained about its activities. 10-20 students attended the orientation in each batch.



Feedback from the students

.. it was interesting to learn that therapies done at the yoga center are condition oriented rather than general treatment..!!

..User friendly and calm environment, together with very professional services given probably motivates more service users wanting to access the services of yoga center.

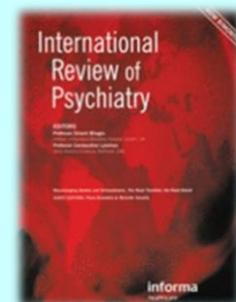
..How yoga can be effective by daily practices was definitely a take home message and it was put beautifully as if you look after yourself by giving one hour per day, body will look after you for the rest of the 23 hours for the day which is very true but not many people realizes!!

Special research publication on Yoga and Mental Health

A Special issue of the *International Review of Psychiatry* published by Taylor & Francis titled "Yoga and Mental Health" was published in June 2016. This issue carries original research and review articles on Yoga and mental health from NIMHANS and Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana (SVYASA Yoga University, Bangalore).

The articles are available at the following link

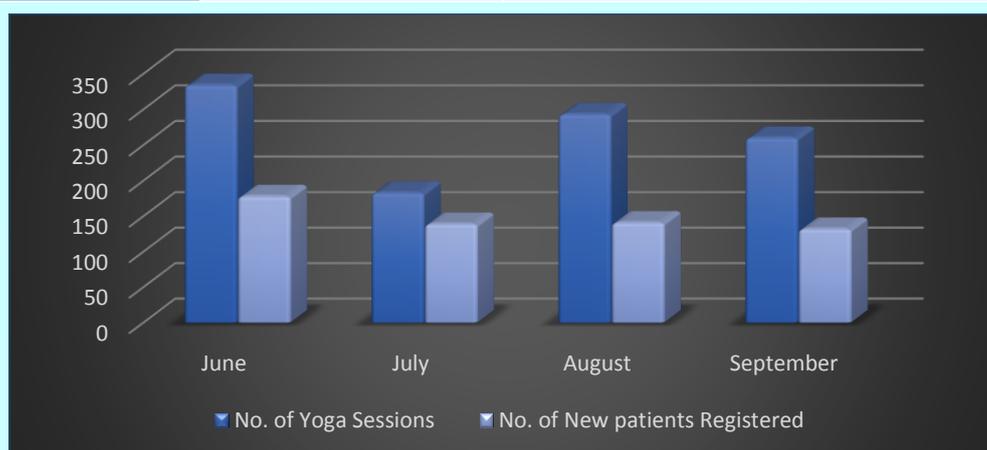
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/iirp20/28/3?nav=tocList>



Yoga therapy for Psychiatric and Neurological Disorders at NICY

NIMHANS Integrated centre for Yoga (NICY) offers yoga therapy for inpatient as well as outpatients. There has been an upward drift of number of patients being referred to NICY, and the number of Yoga therapy sessions for various neuro psychiatric ailments. This depicts the increasing need felt for yoga therapy from doctors, patients and caregivers. Referrals come from all the clinical departments of NIMHANS with varied diagnosis such as Schizophrenia and, other Psychotic Disorders, Bipolar Disorder, Substance Use Disorder, Adjustment Disorder, Anxiety Disorders (includes General Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Panic Disorder, Phobias to name a few), Somatoform pain disorder, Dissociative Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Mild to Moderate Mental Retardation, Seizure Disorder, Migraine, Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disorder, Fronto temporal Dementia, MND (Motor Neuron Disease), Dermatomyositis, Low back Ache, as well as Caregiver Stress. A total of 1070 yoga therapy sessions were conducted at NICY between the months of June to September, 2016. The month of June 2016 has seen the highest number of new registrations and also the highest number of yoga therapy sessions. Statistics has been provided for the month of June, July, August and September 2016 below.

Month	Total No. of Patients	No. of Yoga therapy Sessions	No. of new registrations
June 2016	1215	334	178
July 2016	1106	183	139
August 2016	1210	293	141
September 2016	1034	260	132



Upcoming Event

A one day workshop is being conducted by NIMHANS Integrated Centre for Yoga (NICY): “*Applications of Integrative Medicine in Mental and Neurological Disorders*” in collaboration with University of São Paulo Medical School, Brazil on 27th October 2016.

Book Post

To

Mr/Mrs/Dr.....

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