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Mind-Body News

When reading reports on new research, it is important to remember that no single study should be seen as providing the whole truth. The following reports offer helpful clues but in most cases further research is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Yoga-Based Lifestyle Changes Plus Conventional Care Help Asthma More Than Conventional Care Alone

There is a substantial body of evidence on the efficacy of yoga in the management of bronchial asthma. Many studies have reported, as the effects of yoga on bronchial asthma, significant improvements in pulmonary functions, quality of life and reduction in airway hyper-reactivity, frequency of attacks and medication use. In addition, a few studies have attempted to understand the effects of yoga on exercise-induced bronchoconstriction (EIB) or exercise tolerance capacity. However, none of these studies has investigated any immunological mechanisms by which yoga improves these variables in bronchial asthma.

A randomized controlled trial (RCT) was conducted on 57 adult subjects with mild or moderate bronchial asthma who were allocated randomly to either the yoga (intervention) group (n = 29) or the wait-listed control group (n = 28). The control group received only conventional care and the yoga group received an intervention based on yoga, in addition to the conventional care. The intervention consisted of 2-wk supervised training in lifestyle modification and stress management based on yoga followed by closely monitored continuation of the practices at home for 6-wk. The outcome measures were assessed in both the groups at 0 wk (baseline), 2, 4 and 8 wk. In the yoga group, there was a steady and progressive improvement in pulmonary function, the change being statistically significant in case of the first second of forced expiratory volume (FEV1) at 8 wk, and peak expiratory flow rate (PEFR) at 2, 4 and 8 wk as compared to the corresponding baseline values. There was a significant reduction in EIB in the yoga group. There was also a significant improvement in Asthma Quality of Life (AQOL) scores in both groups over the 8-wk study period. But the improvement was achieved earlier and was more complete in the yoga group. The frequency of rescue medication use showed a significant decrease over the study period in both the groups. However, the decrease was achieved relatively earlier and was more marked in the yoga group than in the control group.

Vempati R, Bijlani RL, Deepak KK. The efficacy of a comprehensive lifestyle modification programme based on yoga in the management of bronchial asthma: a randomized controlled trial. *BMC Pulm Med.* 2009;9:37.

Mind-Body Intervention Helps Depression

Researchers evaluated the effectiveness of a short-term mind-body intervention program on improving the depressive mood of an adult community sample. Forty adult volunteers with various degrees of depressive mood were randomly assigned to the experimental group (Dejian Mind-Body Intervention, DMBI) and control group (Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, CBT). DMBI has four components—traditional Chan practice, diet, health-promoting exercise and “clear body opening.” For each group, a total of four 90-min weekly sessions were conducted. Treatment-related changes were measured using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-II), an electroencephalographic indicator of positive affect (i.e. prefrontal activation asymmetry), and self-report ratings on physical health.

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Results indicated that both the DMBI and the CBT group demonstrated significant reduction in depressive mood. However, among individuals with moderate to severe depressive mood at baseline, only those in the DMBI but not the CBT group showed significant reduction in depressive mood. Only the DMBI group demonstrated a significant increase in prefrontal activation asymmetry, suggesting increase in positive affect. While most psychological therapies for depressive mood normally take several months to show treatment effect, the present findings provided initial data suggesting that the DMBI was effective in improving depressive mood of community adults after 1 month of training.

Chan AS, Cheung MC, Tsui WJ, Sze SL, Shi D. Dejian Mind-Body Intervention on Depressive Mood of Community-Dwelling Adults: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Evid Based Complement Alternat Med*. May 27 2009.